

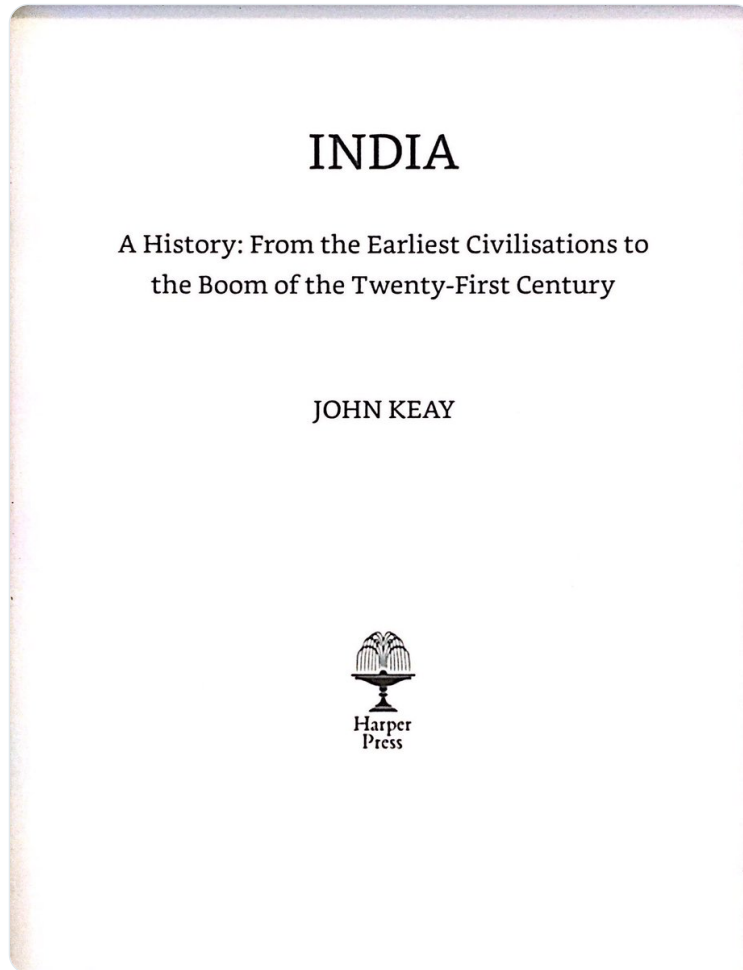


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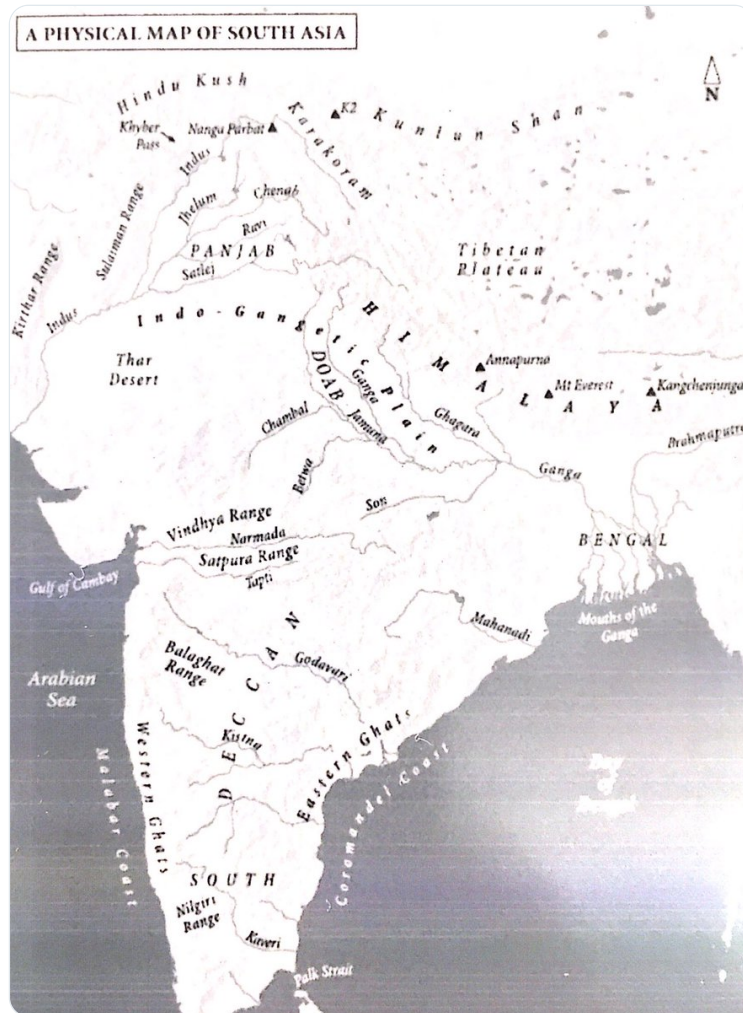
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Thread with excerpts from John Keay's "India A History: From the Earliest Civilizations to the Boom of the Twenty-First Century"



Mountains, rivers, passes, and fords are always important to note



Geography shaped little of India's internal history. Climate has played the main role, fostering different modes of production - from desert herdsmen to floodplain farmers.

Climate decided otherwise. 'India is an amalgam of areas, and also of disparate experiences, which never quite succeeded in forming a single whole';⁴ only the British, according to Fernand Braudel, ever ruled the entire subcontinent; integration proved elusive because the landmass was too large and the population too numerous and diverse. But surprisingly, considering Braudel's emphasis on environments, he ignores a more obvious explanation. Settlement was not uniform and integration not easily achieved because what geography had so obligingly joined together, hydrography put asunder.

India enjoys tropical temperatures, yet during most of the year over most of the country there is no rain. Growth therefore depends on short seasonal precipitations, as epitomised by the south-west monsoon which sweeps unevenly across nearly the whole country between June and September. The pattern of rainfall, and the extent to which particular landscapes can benefit from it by slowing and conserving its run-off, were the decisive factors in determining pat-

terns of settlement. Where water was readily available, the longest, there agriculture could prosper, populations grow, and societies develop. Where not, stubby fingers of scrub, broad belts of desert and bulging plateaux of rock obtruded, cutting off the favoured areas of settlement one from the other.

Like lakes, long rivers with little fall, especially if their flood is prolonged by snow-melt as with the Ganga and the Indus, serve the purpose of conserving water well. Much of northern India relies on its rivers, although the lands they best serve, as also their braided courses and even their number, have changed over the centuries. Depending on one's chosen date, Indian history begins somewhere on the banks of north India's litany of great rivers - either along the lower Indus or amongst the 'five rivers' (*panj-ab*, hence Panjab, or Punjab) which are its tributaries, or in the 'two rivers' (*do-ab*, hence Doab) region between the Jamuna (Jumna) and the Ganga, or along the middle Ganga in eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

North India's mighty river systems ordained much the most extensive of these well-watered zones of agricultural settlement; and though these zones were several, in the course of the first millennium bc they tended to become contiguous, thus creating a corridor of patchy cultivation and settlement from the north-west in what is now Pakistan to Bihar in the east. Here commercial exchange, cultural uniformity and political rivalry got off to an early start. The corridor became a broad swathe of competing states, cherishing similar ideals, revering common traditions and inviting claims of paramourcy. For empire-builders like the Mauryas, Guptas and Vardhanas, this was where the idea of Indian dominion began.

Elsewhere surface reservoirs supplemented rivers as a useful means of water conservation if the terrain permitted. In the deep south, weeks after Tamil Nadu's November rains have ceased, what looks from the air like chronic flooding proves to be a cunningly designed patchwork of fields with their sides so embanked as to

form reservoirs, or 'tanks'. When, after carefully managed use and the inevitable evaporation, the water is nearly exhausted, the tank can itself be planted with a late rice crop. Since the peninsula lacks the vast alluvial plains of the north and has to accommodate hills like the Western Ghats, zones favourable to agricultural settlement were here smaller although numerous and, in cases like the Kerala coast, exceptionally well watered.

In other regions geology did its best for moisture conservation by trapping water underground. From wells it could then be laboriously hauled to the surface for limited irrigation. For the intervening zones of greatest aridity, this sub-surface water was the only source available during most of the year. And since about half the subcontinent receives less than eighty centimetres of rain per year, these arid zones were large. By supposing a continuity between the western deserts of Sind/Rajasthan and the drier parts of central India plus the great Deccan plateau of the peninsula, a broad north – south divide has sometimes been inferred. In fact the terminology here is too vague (even the Deccan is more a designation of convenience than a natural feature). Moreover, considerable rivers traverse this divide: the Chambal and Betwa, tributaries of the Jamuna, afford north – south corridors between the Gangetic plain and the peninsula. And slicing across the waist of India, the west-flowing Narmada forms a much more obvious north – south divide;

indeed it figures historically as something of an Indian Rubicon between the north and the peninsula. Micro-zones with excellent water conservation also dot both Rajasthan and the Deccan; in historical times they would sustain a succession of the most formidable dynasties.

As with the forests and wetlands, the dry-lands were not without their own sparser populations, typically herdsmen and warriors. As barriers, dry regions are hardly as formidable as the seas and mountains of Europe. But as boundaries and frontier zones they did have something of the same effect, encouraging separation, fostering distinction and, in time, confronting ambitious rulers with the great Indian paradox of a land that invited dominion full of lesser rulers who felt bound to resist it.

The socio-cultural dimension to this climate-induced paradox would be even more enduring. Indeed it largely accounts for the strength of 'regional' sentiment in the subcontinent today. In those favoured, because well-watered, zones where settlement became concentrated, surplus agricultural production encouraged the development of non-agricultural activities. Archaeologists are alerted to this process by the distribution of more standardised implements, weapons and styles of pottery. These things also help in the identification of the favoured areas – most notably, and at different times, that great trail across the north from the Indus to the Gangetic basin, plus Gujarat, Malwa and the Orissan littoral in mid-

India's flood myth, its date, its possible origin from Mesopotamian mythology or an old memory of the end of the Harappan civilization on the Indus.

Other historians, while conceding the possibility of 3102 BC, have declared it to be not the date of the Flood but of the great Bharata war. A Trojan-style conflict fought in the vicinity of Delhi, the war involved both gods and men and was immortalised in the Sanskrit verse epic known as the *Mahabharata*, the composition of whose roughly 100,000 stanzas constituted something of an epic in itself. This war, not the flood, was the event that marked the beginning of our present era and must, it is argued, therefore belong to the year 3102 BC. Complex astronomical calculations are deployed in support of this dating, and an inscription carved on a stone temple at Aihole in the south Indian state of Karnataka is said to confirm it.

But the Aihole memorialist, endowing his temple 1600 kilometres from Delhi and nearly four thousand years later, may have got it wrong. According to the genealogical listings in the *Puranas*, a later collection of 'ancient legends', ninety-five generations passed away between the Flood and the war; other evidence based on sterner, more recent, scholarship agrees that the war was much later than the fourth millennium BC. This greatest single event in India's ancient history, and the inspiration for the world's longest poem, did not occur until 'C1400 BC' according to the *History and Culture of the Indian People*, a standard work of many volumes commissioned in the 1950s to celebrate India's liberation from foreign rule and foreign scholarship.

Nevertheless, 3102 BC sticks in the historical gullet. Such are the dismal uncertainties of early Indian chronology that no slip of the chisel is going to deny the historian the luxury of a real date. Corroboration of the idea that it may, after all, apply to a Flood has

since come from the excavations in distant Iraq of one of Mesopotamia's ancient civilisations. There too archaeologists have found evidence of an appalling inundation. It submerged the Sumerian city of Shuruppak, and has been dated with some confidence to the late fourth millennium BC. In fact, 3102 BC would suit it very well.

This Sumerian inundation, and the local Genesis story in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* which probably derived from it, is taken to be the origin of the legend of the Flood which eventually found its way into Jewish and Christian tradition. Yet in many respects the Sumerian account is more closely echoed in the Indian version than in the Semitic. For instance, just as in later Hindu tradition Manu's fish becomes an incarnation of the great god Vishnu, so the Sumerian deity responsible for saving mankind is often represented in the form of a fish. 'It is the agreement in details which is so striking,' according to Romila Thapar.² The details argue strongly for some common source for this most popular of Genesis myths, and scholars like Thapar, ever ready to expose cultural plagiarism, see both Manu and Noah as relocated manifestations of a Sumerian prototype.

The tendency to synchronise and subordinate things Indian to parallel events and achievements in the history of countries to the west of India is a recurrent theme in Indian historiography and has rightly incurred the wrath of some Indian historians. So much so that they sometimes go to the other extreme of denying that any creative impetus, any technological invention, even any stylistic convention, ever reached India from the west – or, indeed, the West. And in the case of the Flood they may have a point. Subject to the annual deluge of the monsoon and living for the most part on the

flat alluvial plains created by notoriously erratic river systems, the people of north India have always had far more experience of floods, and far more reason to fear them, than their neighbours in the typically more arid lands of western Asia.

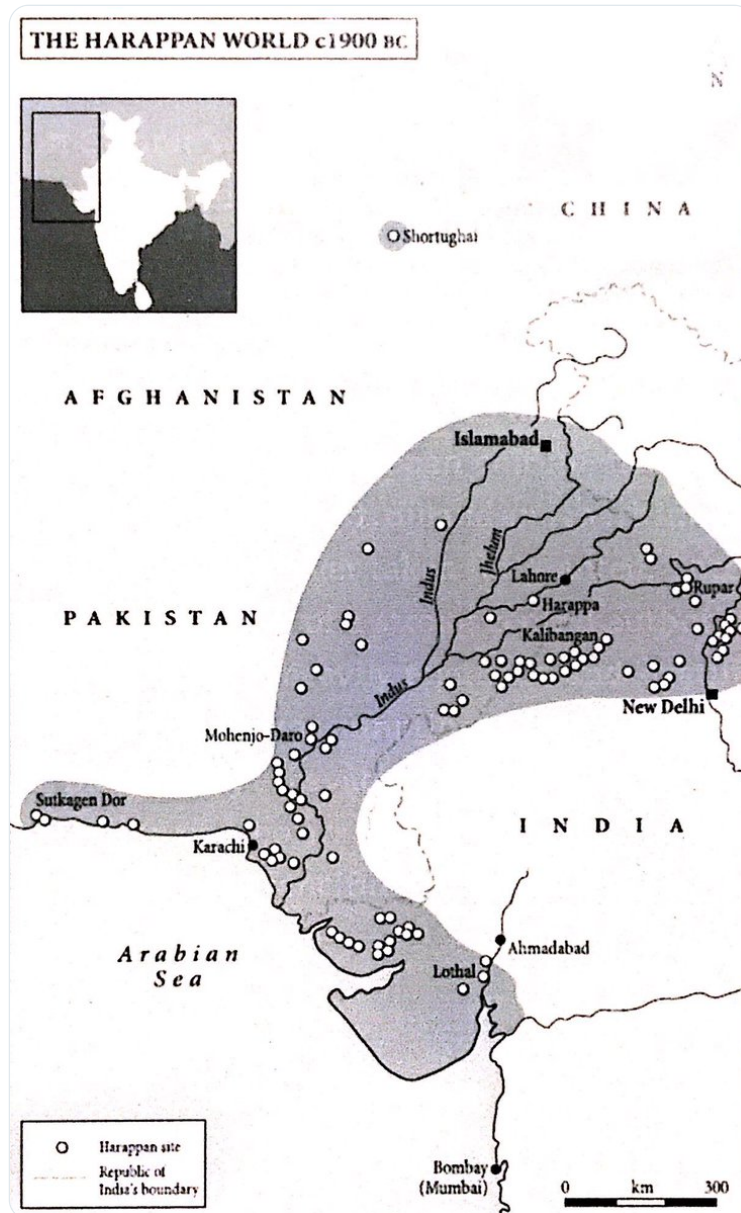
Floods, though now associated more with the eastern seaboard of the Indian subcontinent and Bangladesh, still annually inundate vast areas of the Ganga and Indus basins. They have always done so. One such Gangetic flood, dated by archaeologists to about 800 BC, destroyed the town of Hastinapura which, after the great Bharata war, had become the capital of the descendants of Arjuna, one of the war's main protagonists. Since the flooding of Hastinapura is also recorded in Sanskrit textual tradition, and since the same tradition says that the town was then under its seventh ruler since the war, an approximate date for the war itself of about 975 BC has been postulated.

Thus, for the titanic struggle recorded in the *Mahabharata*, we already have three dates: 3102 BC, C1400 BC and C950 BC. A couple of millennia one way or the other is a long time even in prehistoric terms. India's history, though undoubtedly ancient, leaves much room for manoeuvre. A mistranslated word from one of the many voluminous, difficult and defective texts wherein, long after their composition, the Vedic verses were eventually written down, can create havoc. Similarly a chance discovery of no obvious provenance can prompt major revisions.

Another flood, later than the Sumerian one but much earlier than that at Hastinapura and so perhaps a serious contender for the one which Manu survived, is thought by some to have once inundated the plains of the lower Indus in what is now Pakistan. Geolo-

gists date it to some time soon after 2000 BC, and claim that it may in fact have been a succession of inundations. Whether they were the result of climate change, of tectonic action lower down the river resulting in damming and the formation of inland lakes, or simply the cumulative effect of annual siltation is not clear. But whatever the cause, the floods were bad news for those agriculturalists who had pioneered a highly productive economy based on growing cereals in the fine soil alongside the river. Managing the river's seasonal rise so as to enrich and irrigate their fields was the key to their success. An annual surplus had generated wealth, encouraged craft industries and fostered trade. Settlements had become cities. Along the lower Indus and its tributaries had grown up one of the world's first urban societies, a contemporary of those on the Nile and the Euphrates and a rival for the tag of 'the cradle of civilisation'.

Then, soon after 2000 BC according to the archaeologists, came the floods. If they did not actually overwhelm this precocious civilisation, they certainly obliterated it. In time, layer after layer of Indus mud, possibly wind-blown as well as water-borne, choked the streets, rotted the timbers, and piled high above the rooftops. The ground level rose by ten metres and the water table followed it. Meanwhile the river resumed its regular flow and found new channels down which to flood. On top of the cities, now consigned to oblivion beneath tons of alluvium, other peoples grazed their goats, sowed their seeds and spun their myths. A great civilisation was lost to memory.



Much like the recent research into the Early European Farmers and the Classical Mayans, it seems the Harappans had a large and organized state with a blood defined aristocracy.

Several thousand seals and sealings have now been found. The seals appear to have been distributed throughout the Harappan world, not simply in its major population centres, and to have been carried about or worn, each having a boss or hole by which they could be threaded on a string. The distribution of the sealings suggests that seals may have been used to facilitate the exchange of goods over long distances. Thus the stamped image, attached to a consignment of goods, might have identified their owner, provenance, destination or contents, and so have served somewhat the role of a waybill or even a bar-code. Clearly, if this was indeed their purpose, their multiplicity and far-flung distribution argues for a vast and buzzing commercial network. Perhaps, instead of conspicuous expenditure on monuments and memorials, the Harappans pumped their surplus into commodity exchange. It has even been suggested that the Harappans were so dependent on this exchange that its apparent decline in the early second millennium BC was a cause, rather than an effect, of the disintegration of urban life.

Although the script remains indecipherable, interesting conclusions have been drawn from the images which usually accompany it on the seals. These are often single animals, as with the humped bull, the elephant, the tiger and a magnificent rhino. Commonest of all, however, is a stocky creature unknown to zoology with the body

of a bull and the head of a zebra, from which head a single horn curls majestically upwards and then forwards. In fact, 'the "unicorn" occurs on 1156 seals and sealings out of a total of 1755 found at Mature Harappan sites, that is on 60 per cent of all seals and sealings.'² Shireen Ratnagar, an authority on Harappan trade, also notes that, since the word symbols which accompany these images vary from seal to seal, image and text must have conveyed different information; and that, since the images recur frequently and look like totemic subjects, they may be the identifying symbols of different social groups. Assuming such groups were based on descent, as with the Vedic Aryans, Ratnagar calls them 'lineages' or clans.

... we would therefore infer that the 'unicorn' was the symbol of the dominant lineage which had expanded, or was expanding, by assimilation or alliance at the expense of other lineages, and administrative office and lineage affiliation would be closely connected. In other words, we may interpret the unicorn as the religious expression of a system of political control operating through lineage connexions.¹⁰

How this political control operated, and whether oppressively or consensually, it is impossible to say. Likewise, as noted, we have no clear idea what religious practices the Harappans subscribed to. Here, and in other researches, there is, though, a gradually emerging notion of a Harappan state. Ratnagar conjectures that it began to emerge when numerous ethnic and/or cultural groups were drawn together by alliance, intermarriage and agricultural or industrial specialisation. By the time of the Mature Harappan phase

these groups formed not a federation but a single state. In fact 'at this stage of knowledge it appears to me that we are dealing with a veritable Harappan "empire".'

This being the case, the total, albeit gradual, eclipse of Harappan civilisation is all the more mystifying. Sumerian civilisation led on to that of Babylon, Egypt's Old Kingdom was succeeded by the Middle Kingdom and the New Kingdom, China's dynastic succession scarcely faltered. But in the Indian subcontinent the first great experiment in urban living, in political organisation and in commercial enterprise disappeared without trace beneath the sand and the silt. In the land of reincarnation there was to be no rebirth for the bustling and ingenious world of the Harappans. History would have to begin again with a very different group of people.

The Harappan endonym may have survived in Sanskrit as a slur for a foreigner, as the word is similar to the name the Sumerians called the Harappans.

skills under some kind of Aryan patronage or stimulus.

In the Vedas there is even mention of 'Hariyupiya' as a place-name. It could be the Harappan site itself, although most scholars take its context to indicate a river, probably west of the Indus. Finally, there is the intriguing possibility that the word 'Meluhha', the name by which the Sumerians apparently designated their Harappan trading partners, eventually resurfaced in Sanskrit as *mleccha*. The latter was a term of contempt used by the *arya* to disparage

those whom they regarded as non-*arya*. It thus meant much the same as *dasa* and *dasyu*, words which unfortunately predate its appearance. Philologists, however, insist that *mleccha* cannot possibly be Sanskrit in origin. The reflexive consonants clearly show the word to have been borrowed from some local tongue. Perhaps it was just an onomatopoeic word derived from the uncouth gobbledygook in which, to *arya* ears, the *dasa* spoke. But if it was derived from the term by which the *dasa* peoples described themselves, then coincidence can scarcely deny that the *mleccha* people must have been the Harappans, or rather the 'Meluhhans'.

Discussion of the arrival of the Aryans. Book was published in 2000, before DNA studies. The Aryans were much bloodier than he guesses, although he is right that there were a lot of natives who assimilated.

Although this idea currently derives no credibility from its aggressive repetition in Hindu nationalist publications, and although it is flatly denied by the *arya's* familiarity with horses (typically central Asian) and their ignorance of elephants (typically Indian), it is certainly curious that the Vedas say nothing of life in central Asia, nor of an epic journey thence through the mountains, nor of arriving in the deliciously different environment of the subcontinent. The usual explanation is that, by the time the Vedas were composed, this migration was so remote that all memory of it had faded; and on this basis a tentative chronology is proposed. Allowing, then, first for a major time-lapse (say two hundred years) between the Late Harappan phase and the Aryan arrival in India, and then for a plausible memory gap (say another two hundred years) between arrival and the composition of the earliest Vedas, it looks as if the *arya* must have entered India some time between 1500 bc and 1300 bc. Most authorities now suppose several waves of migration rather than a single mass movement. These waves probably consisted of different tribes and, on linguistic evidence, may have been spread over centuries. So possibly the entire period was one of Aryan incursion.

As to whether all or any of these incursions constituted invasions rather than migrations it is impossible to say. We may, though, speculate. Considered in the light of later incursions into north-

west India by Alexander the Great or of most or other intruders, including those afire with the spirit of Islam, the Aryan coming has traditionally been seen as a full-scale invasion. The indigenous people 'naturally resisted the newcomers, and a fierce and protracted struggle ensued'. In a standard textbook on ancient India, R.C. Majumdar goes on to identify the indigenous resistance as coming from 'Dravidians', the assumption being that the indigenous *dasa* spoke a Dravidian, as opposed to a Sanskritic, language.

It was not merely a struggle between two nationalities. The Dravidians had to fight for their very existence ... But all in vain ... The Dravidians put up a brave fight, and laid down their lives in hundreds and thousands on various battlefields, but ultimately had to succumb to the attacks of the invaders. The Aryans destroyed their castles and cities, burnt their houses, and reduced a large number of them to slaves.⁸

Recent theories of multiple migrations have somewhat softened this picture. Perhaps some of the Aryan clans were invited into India as allies, mercenaries or traders; the indigenous *dasa* may not have been 'Dravidians' but earlier Indo-Aryan arrivals; there is nothing to suggest that they ever constructed 'castles and cities'; and the archaeological evidence, being almost entirely ceramic, gives no hint of the sudden change one would expect from the conquest and suppression of an entire 'nationality'.

There is, though, another explanation. Seen in the context not of later invasions in the north-west, but of later extensions of *arya* influence to the rest of India, a rather different and more intriguing

vocabulary, and inducting *dasa* clans and leaders into their society. Despite the importance attached to the purity of Sanskrit, there is even a hint of *dasa-arya* bilingualism. With the horse and the chariot by way of a dazzling new technology, and with the subtleties of ritual sacrifice as a mesmerising ideology, the *arya* may have secured recognition of their superiority by a process no more deliberate and menacing than social attraction and cultural osmosis; thus the Aryan invasion and conquest of India could be as much a 'myth' and a 'red herring' as the existence of an Aryan race.

It should, however, be emphasised that in the second millennium bc the familiar traits of Aryanisation, those three pillars of language, priesthood and social hierarchy, were only just beginning to emerge. All are evident in the earliest Vedas, but they are undeveloped. They only assume definition and primacy in the context of contact between the *arya* and the various indigenous peoples. Quite possibly the latter contributed to, or participated in, the formulation of these 'pillars'. *Arya* culture may itself have been a hybrid, and 'Aryanisation' may therefore be a misnomer.

picture emerges. Arguably this process of 'Aryanisation' by which *arya* culture spread to non-*arya* peoples continued throughout the subcontinent's history, indeed is still going on to this day. In little-frequented enclaves of central and north-eastern India tribal communities of *adivasi*, or aboriginal, people may even now be found in various transitional stages of Aryanisation (or 'Sanskritisation'). A similar process is said to have been observable amongst distant peoples, like the Fijians, who were affected by the Indian diaspora of colonial times. In both cases, Aryan ideas and influence were initially carried by work-seekers and traders, not warmongers. More significantly, exactly the same process probably accounted for the gradual Aryanisation of peninsular India plus much of south-east Asia.

An Aryanised society may be defined as one in which primacy is accorded to a particular language (Sanskrit), to an authoritative priesthood (brahmins) and to a hierarchical social structure (caste). To establish these three 'pillars' of Aryanisation in, say, Kerala or Java no sizeable relocation of people would have been necessary. As will be seen, the process appears simply to have been one of gradual acculturation requiring neither mass migration nor enforced concurrence. A small admixture of fortune-seekers, traders or teachers who happened to be in possession of a superior technology and of a persuasive ideology could and did, if prepared to compromise with existing custom, create a convincing and lasting veneer of Aryanisation without apparently antagonising anyone.

Admittedly, indeed on their own admission, the *arya* cattle-rustlers of the Rig Veda did antagonise the *dasa*. But they also compromised with them, adopting *dasa* technology, *dasa* cults and *dasa*

The caste system with its division of society into priests, nobles, farmers, and the untouchable descendants of the pre-Aryan natives. As civilization evolved, states organized as noble republics or monarchies replaced the old clans.

consignments.

All of which presupposes the existence of specialised professions: artisans and cultivators, carters and boatmen, merchants and financiers. It was all a far cry from the clan communities of the Vedas. North Indian society had been undergoing structural changes every bit as radical as those affecting its agricultural base and its political organisation. These changes are usually interpreted in terms of the emerging caste system. They have to be extracted, with some difficulty, from the changing terms used to designate individuals and social groups in the different texts. And it would appear that the process of change was gradual, uneven and complex.

Basically the Vedas and the epics portray the concerns, and celebrate the exploits, of a society consisting almost entirely of well-born clansmen. Known as *ksatriya* and *rajanya*, these warrior families acknowledged a chief with whom they shared a common ancestor. The chief was their *raja*, a term rich in potential for misunderstanding in that it later came to mean a king in the monarchical states and an elector, or a participant in government, in the republics. Thus Vaisali, the capital of the Licchavi *gana-sangha* in northern Bihar, is said to have housed 7707 *rajas*, or in another account 'twice 84,000 *rajas*'. As well as the leadership of their *rajas*, the *ksatriya* also acknowledged the ritual insights and sacerdotal authority of a non-*ksatriya* priesthood, the brahmins. The latter,

their profession becoming hereditary and exclusive through emphasis on their descent from certain ancient *risis* or seers, assumed the status of a parallel caste with well advertised rights and taboos derived from their monopoly of sacrificial lore, of religious orthodoxy and of academic jargon.

To these two castes was appended a third, possibly to differentiate clansmen of less distinguished descent who had forsaken their warrior past for agriculture and other wealth-generating pursuits. *Vaisya*, the term used to describe this caste, derives from *vis*, which originally meant the entire tribal community. They were thus considered to be of *arya* descent and, like the brahman and *ksatriya*, were *dvija* or 'twice born' (once physically, a second time through initiation rituals). As the *ksatriya*, literally 'the empowered ones', assumed military, political and administrative powers within the new state structures, the unempowered remainder of the erstwhile *vis*, that is the *vaisya*, continued as *gramini* and *grhpati*, villagers and household heads. Their role was that of creating the wealth on which the *ksatriya* and brahman depended or, as the texts have it, on which *ksatriya* and brahman might 'graze'. In pursuit of this productive ideal many *vaisya* accumulated land holdings while others invested in trade and industry. Much later, just as the *ksatriya* in recognition of their martial status would be equated with 'rajputs', so the *vaisya* would be identified with the essentially mercantile 'bania'.

Beyond the pale of the *arya* were a variety of indigenous peoples like the despised *dasa* of the Vedas. All were, nevertheless, subject to varying degrees of Aryanisation. Some, perhaps in recognition of their numerical superiority in regions newly penetrated by the

clans, were actually co-opted into the three *dvija* castes while their cults and deities were accommodated in the growing pantheon of what we now call Hinduism. Others obstinately retained forms of speech and conduct which disqualified them from co-option and, perhaps as a result of conquest, they were relegated to functional roles considered menial and impure. *Dasa* came to denote a household slave or rural helot and *dasi* a female domestic or slave-concubine. Slavery was not, however, practised on a scale comparable to that in Greece or Rome, perhaps because most of these indigenous peoples were in fact assigned an intermediate status as *sudra*. The term is of uncertain origin and seems also to have embraced those born of mixed-caste parentage. Its functional connotation is clear enough, however. Just as the *vaisya* was expected to furnish wealth, the *sudra* was expected to furnish labour.

These then were the four earliest castes, and a much-quoted passage from the latest mandala (X) of the Rig Veda clearly shows their relative status. When, in the course of a gory creation myth, the gods were carving up the sacrificial figure who represented mankind, they chose to chop him into four bits, each of which prefigured a caste. 'The brahman was his mouth, of both arms was the *rajanya* (*ksatriya*) made, his thighs became the *vaisya*, from his feet the *sudra* was produced.'¹² Thus organised into a stratified hierarchy, each caste was theoretically immutable and exclusive; the purity taboos which derived from sacrificial ritual provided barriers to physical contact, while the lineage obsessions of clan society provided barriers to intermarriage.

The Dravidians in southern India adopted the Hindu epics and their priests, but didn't adopt the caste system. @Glossophilic75

Similar changes may have been underway in peninsular India. Since neither Mahavira nor the Buddha ventured south, their followers had little to record of the area and there are no textual sources for it before the end of the first millennium BC. But it is clear that by then proto-states were well established in the extreme south and that they were already engaged in maritime trade. How much they owed to Aryanising influences is debatable. Although the epics were evidently known and brahmins respected, social stratification took a rather un-Aryan form, with different taboos and no place for two of the four *varnas*. In fact to this day indigenous *vaisya* and *ksatriya* castes are practically unknown in peninsular India.

By the 5th century BC, religious reform movements spread as the result of dissatisfaction with traditional religious practices. Parallels to the environment that led to Zoroastrianism.

sixth century, state-formation and urbanisation brought forward to the fifth century, and the chronology of Magadha before the appearance of Ashoka condensed into a hundred years.

Alternatively, it may be taken to suggest a much longer time-lapse between the India of later Vedic texts, like the *Upanisads*, and that of the earliest Buddhist and Jain texts. Even a cursory acquaintance with these sources leaves the reader wondering whether they can possibly refer to the same society. The Sanskrit texts evoke a mostly agrarian way of life in which states play a minor part and status is governed by lineage and ritual observance. Buddhist and Jain texts, on the other hand, portray a network of functioning states, each with an urban nucleus heavily engaged in trade and production. Here wealth as much as lineage confers status. Indeed, the Buddhist concept of 'merit' as something to be earned, accumulated, occasionally transferred and eventually realised seems inconceivable without a close acquaintance with the moneyed economy. By interleaving between these two societies a further century, Buddhism's newly revised or 'short chronology' allows for a more gradual and credible evolution of state and city without unduly taxing the archaeological record.

Similarly, it allows room for the evolution of a tradition of heterodoxy and dissent. Buddhist texts in particular portray a society that was already in religious ferment when the Buddha was born. Rival holy-men swarm across the countryside performing feats of endurance, disputing one another's spiritual credentials and vying with one another for followers and patronage. That this was not simply the impression of partisan hotheads is shown by the dispassionate Kautilya whose compendium on statecraft, the *Arthashastra*,

recognises such renunciates as an important constituent of any state; they are to be given legal protection and free passage; special forest areas are to be allotted to them for meditation, and special lodging-houses in the city. Saints or charlatans, they evidently mirrored a society to which the paranormal, the supernatural and the metaphysical had a strong appeal. Many of them went naked or unwashed and they cheerfully flouted the taboos of caste status. Defying social convention, they yet enjoyed society's indulgence. Renunciation had become an accepted way of life in which asceticism was seen as a prerequisite to spiritual enlightenment.

The philosophies on offer from this rag-tag army of reformers ranged from mind-boggling mysticism to defiant nihilism and blank agnosticism, from the outright materialism of the Lokayats to the heavy determinism of the Ajivikas, and from the rationalism of the Buddha to the esotericism of Mahavira. Most, however, agreed in condemning the extravagance of Vedic sacrifice, in sidelining the Vedic pantheon, and in ignoring brahmanical authority. Moreover many, including the Jains, Buddhists and Ajivikas, recognised an assortment of antecedents whose teachings or experiences had in some sense anticipated their own. In other words, Mahavira, the Buddha, and Gosala of the Ajivikas acknowledged well established traditions of heterodoxy; and as one might infer from their own reception, they were able to capitalise on an already existing thirst for spiritual and moral guidance, as well as on an abiding credulity. Clearly the new sources of wealth and authority associated with state-formation and urbanisation had plunged society into a crisis which the rigidities of the *varnasramadharmas* (the organisation of society into caste *varnas* and into social vocations

based on age) could scarcely accommodate, and to which the ritual oblations of the Vedas seemed irrelevant as well as wildly extravagant.

Adopting, then, not the conventional 486–386 for the *parinirvana* but some date between 400 and 350 BC, one may place the birth of Siddhartha Gautama, the 'Buddha', some time in the mid-fifth century. Like his contemporary, Mahavira Nataputta of the Jains, he was a *ksatriya*, the son of Suddhodana, *raja* of the Sakyas. The Sakya state being one of those republican *gana-sanghas*, it had many *rajās*. And since their chief was elected, the 'Prince' Siddhartha of later legend must be considered a fabrication. Moreover, Kapilavastu, the Sakya capital, was not a major political centre. Just within the southern border of present-day Nepal, it may have served as a staging post on the *uttarapatha*. Trade and craftsmanship were more the Buddha's milieu than royal ceremonial. The affluence against which he eventually reacted by renouncing his wife and family to begin an enquiry into the human condition may have been real; equally it may have been the perceived luxury of more celebrated urban centres like Vaisali, capital of the Licchavis, or the Koshalan metropolis of Sravasti, or Rajagriha in Magadha.

Out of religious ferment and social strife in the time of Alexander, a low caste man declares war on all the high castes, and carves out a large empire in northern India. He founds a new dynasty - the Nandas.

control.

Thus, in the space of two reigns which conveniently straddled the long life of the Buddha, Magadha had emerged from comparative inconsequence to dominate the lower Ganga with a territorial reach that extended from the Bay of Bengal to the Nepal Himalayas. Further up the Ganga, the kingdom of Vatsya, possibly the successor state to that of the Kuru of Hastinapura, still flourished with its capital at Kaushambi (near Allahabad). So did the kingdom of Avanti, based on Ujjain (near Indore) far to the south on the banks of the Narmada river. Kaushambi and Ujjain were engaged in their own power struggle. Into it Magadha seems occasionally to have been drawn, and from it Ajatashatru's successors were able to profit, although it is unclear when Magadhan supremacy was recognised in these distant regions.

In fact the grave uncertainty which surrounds the history of Magadha immediately after Ajatashatru extends even to the succession. Between Ajatashatru's death some time between C380 bc and C330 bc (according to the 'short chronology') and the accession of Chandragupta Maurya in C320 bc the sources speak mainly of court intrigues and murders. Evidently the throne changed hands frequently, perhaps with more than one incumbent claiming to occupy it at the same time. Eventually it was secured by Mahapadma Nanda, the son of a barber and therefore not only a usurper but also a low-caste *sudra*. According to the orthodox *Puranas*, he invoked his caste status to conduct a vendetta against all *ksatriyas*. Since most existing kings were, or claimed to be, *ksatriyas*, this represented a declaration of war on the entire political order. Remarkable conquests resulted. By 326 bc the Nanda family was ruling over a

greatly extended kingdom which included the whole of the Ganga valley plus Orissa and parts of central India.

Mahapadma Nanda himself may have been responsible for these conquests. He is the first to be described as a 'one-umbrella sovereign', a concept closely related to the Buddhist idea of a pan-Indian *cakravartin* or 'world ruler' and implying the association of all existing polities under a single sovereign. Patriotic Indian historians tend to pounce on this early evidence of national integration and to hail Mahapadma Nanda as 'the first great historical emperor of Northern India'. The wealth of the Nandas also became legendary, and was supposedly buried in a cave in the bed of the Ganga. Their exactions and unpopularity were remembered too, although this may have been the result of failing to placate either brahmanical or Buddhist opinion with the munificence expected of royal patrons.

The Nanda family undeniably commanded the most formidable standing army yet seen in India. Military statistics readily lend themselves to exaggeration, especially when provided by a disappointed adversary. Yet the Nandas' army of 200,000 infantry, twenty thousand cavalry, two thousand four-horse chariots and three to six thousand war-elephants would have represented a formidable force even if decimated by roll-call reality. It was certainly enough to strike alarm in stout Greek hearts, to awaken in them fond memories of Thracian wine and olive-rich homesteads beside the northern Aegean, and to send packing the age's only other contender as a 'one umbrella' world ruler.

The Nandas' class war made them deeply unpopular. The founder of the powerful Maurya dynasty gained support from their enemies in the Punjab (recently abandoned by Alexander) and defeated the Nandas. His name is Chandragupta, and he met Alexander before he gained power.

exemplar of political integration and moral regeneration.

In 326 bc, when Alexander was in the Panjab, 'Aggrames' or 'Xandrames' ruled over the Gangetic region according to these Graeco-Roman accounts. His was the prodigious army at which Alexander's men had balked; and his father was the low-born son of a barber and a courtesan who had founded a dynasty with its capital at Pataliputra. 'Andrames' was therefore a Nanda, probably the youngest of Mahapadma Nanda's sons. And since, unusually, these Graeco-Roman accounts agree with the *Puranas* that Nanda rule lasted only two generations, he was the last of his line. Immensely unpopular as well as dismally documented, the second Nanda was about to be overthrown.

According to Plutarch, Alexander had actually met the man who would usurp the Magadhan throne. His name was 'Sandrokottos' ('Sandracottus' in Latin) and in 326 bc he was in Taxila, perhaps studying and already enjoying Taxilan sanctuary as he prepared to rebel against Nanda authority. No such person, however, is known to Indian tradition, the voluminous king-lists in the *Puranas* containing no mention of a 'Sandrokottos' sound-alike. Although from other Greek sources, especially the account of Megasthenes, an ambassador who would visit India in C300 bc, it was evident that someone called Sandrokottos had indeed reigned in the Gangetic valley, it was still not clear to which if any of the many listed Indian kings he corresponded, nor whether he ruled from Pataliputra, nor whether he could be the same as Plutarch's Sandrokottos. Like Porus and Omphis, it looked as if Sandrokottos

Chandragupta Maurya's origins were probably undistinguished; they certainly remain so. Buddhist texts claim that he was related to the Buddha's Sakya clan, others that he was related to the Nandas. Both may be taken as fairly transparent attempts to confer lustre and legitimacy on a new dynasty whose founder was of humble caste, possibly a *vaishya*. If not born in the Panjab, he seems to have spent some time there, as suggested by Plutarch and as confirmed by a legend, found in both Indian and Graeco-Roman sources, associating him with the lion. Tigers were widely distributed throughout India, but the Indian lion, now retaining a claw-hold only in a corner of Gujarat, seems never to have roamed further east than Rajasthan and Delhi.

At some point in his youth the self-possessed Chandragupta was adopted as a promising candidate for future glory by Kautilya (otherwise known as Chanakya), a devious and disgruntled brah-

man who had been slighted at the Nanda court. Kautilya sought his revenge by exploiting the unpopularity of the Nandas; and, disqualified from kingship himself because of deformity (possibly only the loss of his teeth), he championed the ambitions of Chandragupta. An early attempt to overthrow Nanda power in Magadha itself was a failure. Perhaps Kautilya hoped to achieve his ends by a simple *coup d'état* but failed to win sufficient support. The pair resolved to try again, and took their cue from a small boy who was observed to tackle his *chapati* by first nibbling round its circumference. This time, instead of striking at the heart of Nanda power, they would work their way in from its crusty periphery, exploiting dissent and enlisting support amongst its dependent kingdoms before storming the centre.

A good starting place may have been the Panjab, where Alexander's departure had left a potential power vacuum. Settlements founded by the Macedonian seem not to have prospered, and their garrisons to have trailed home or gravitated to older power centres like Taxila. While in western Asia Alexander's successors disputed his inheritance, the Indian satrapies reverted to local control. Ambhi and Porus, designated governors for the region by Alexander, had no love for the Nandas and may, under the circumstances, have felt themselves entitled to endorse Mauryan ambitions. Troops from the *gana-sangha* republics, of which there were still many in the north-west, are also said to have joined Chandragupta, along with other local malcontents. So, more certainly, did a power-

Pataliputra was probably besieged and, aided no doubt by defectors, the allies triumphed. The last Nanda was sent packing, quite literally: he is supposed to have been spared only his life, plus such of his legendary wealth as he could personally crate and carry away. The hill chief, with whom Kautilya seems previously to have agreed on a partition of the spoils, was then poisoned, probably at Kautilya's instigation, and Chandragupta Maurya ascended the Magadhan throne in, as has been noted, C320 bc.

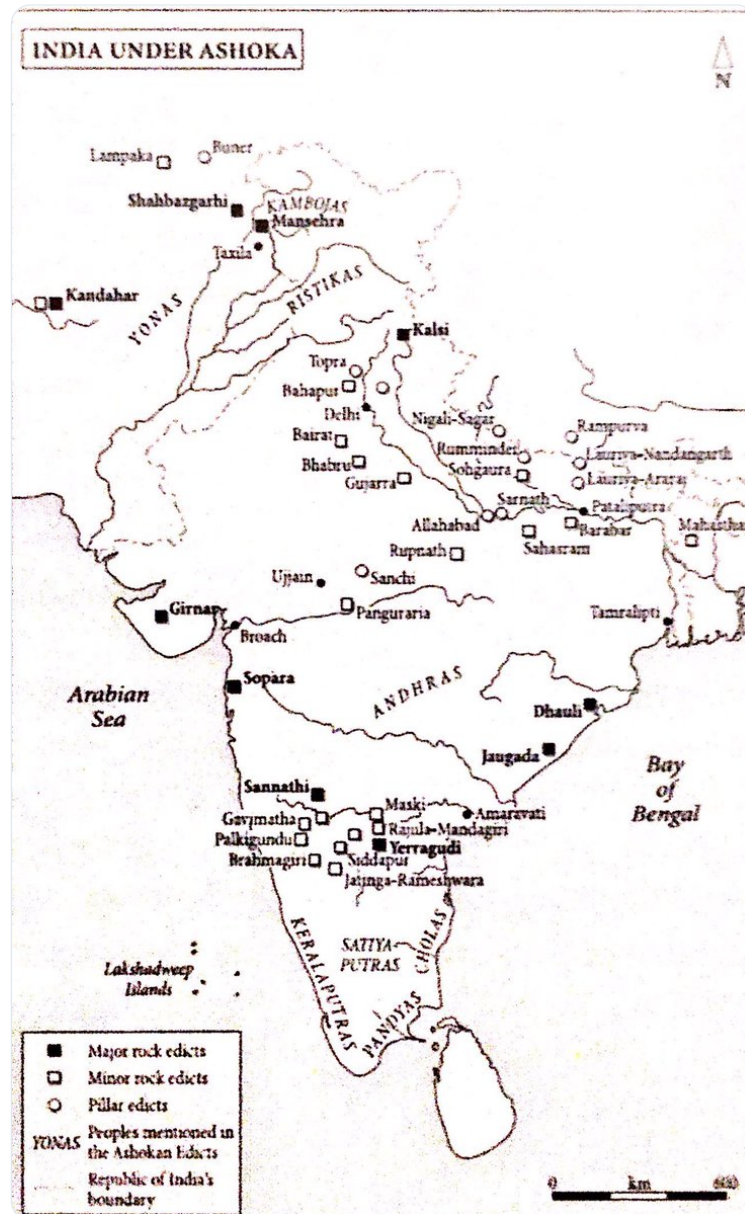
Of his reign very little is known for certain. There are hints that pockets of Nanda resistance had to be laboriously stamped out, and there is ample information in the *Arthashastra* that could be used, and usually is, to flesh out the policies and methods on which Mauryan dominion was founded. Firm evidence of the extent of this dominion comes mainly from later sources. But since few named conquests can definitely be credited to his successors, it seems likely that Chandragupta, adding the Nandas' vast army to his own, found ample employment for it. He may reasonably be considered the creator as well as the founder of the Mauryan empire, indeed 'an Indian Julius Caesar' as nationalist historians call him (though chronologically speaking Caesar should, of course, be 'a Roman Chandragupta').

The suggestion has also been made that Chandragupta derived the very idea of an empire based on military supremacy from his observation of Alexander's conceit. Yet unlike Alexander, whose campaigns progress from one victorious encounter to the next, he

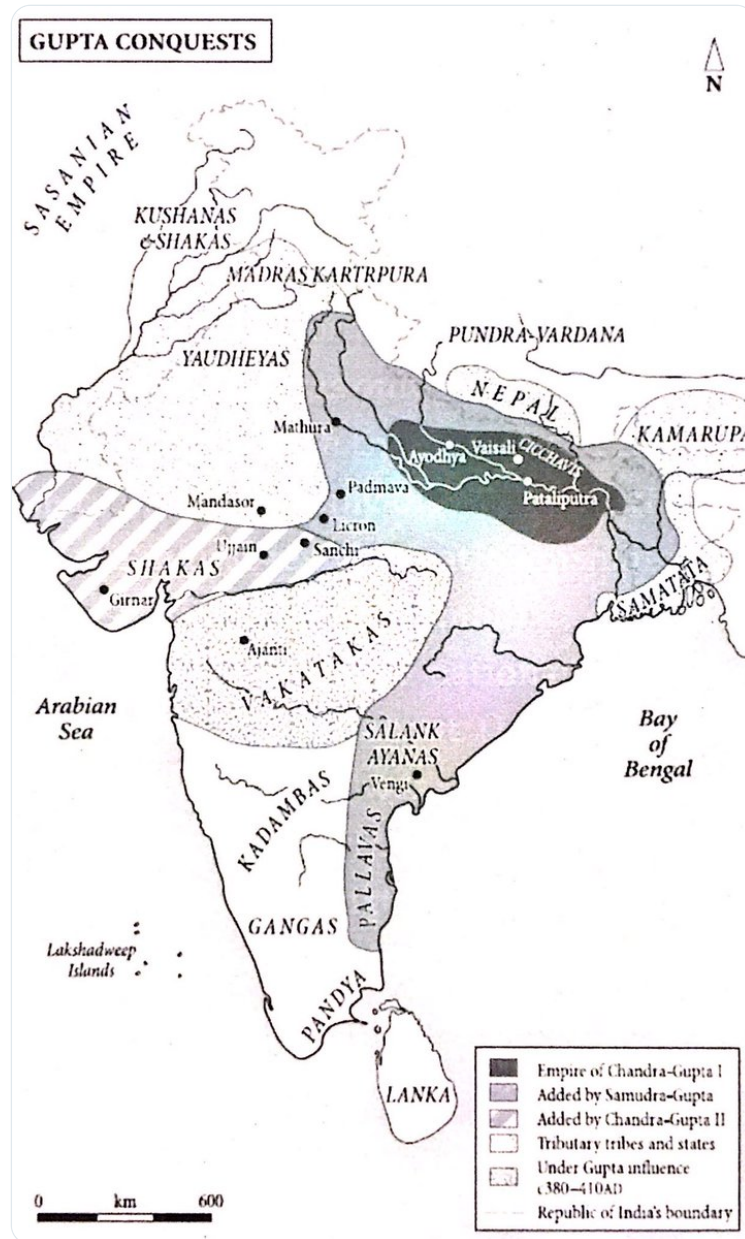
ruhi nu enier with whom Kautiyya negotiated an offensive alliance. Overrunning the satellite states and outlying provinces of the Nanda kingdom, the allies eventually converged on Magadha.

cannot certainly be created with winning a single battle. The Mauryan empire was probably the most extensive ever forged by an Indian dynasty; even the Mughals rarely achieved a wider hegemony.

Size of the Maurya domains



The Gupta



Ecumenism in Gupta society. Author argues that Hinduism not a real faith until 18th century, although the parts of the religion long predate that.

the city'.¹⁷

As between the orthodox and the heterodox sects ecumenism was still the norm. The Guptas, although identifying themselves with Lord Vishnu and performing Vedic sacrifices, encouraged endowments to both Buddhist and brahman establishments with even-handed munificence. Yet the physical separation of the two communities, as implied in Fa Hian's account, may be significant. Buddhist monasteries were usually located outside the main centres of population and influence, near enough for collecting alms and instructing the laity but far enough for tranquillity and seclusion. The 'brahmacharis', on the other hand, technically brahman students but here implying the whole brahman educational establishment, were now located within the city and close to the court.

Hinduism as a religion with accepted doctrines was unknown. Arguably it remained so until the nineteenth century. The criteria of orthodoxy lay – and lie – in conduct rather than belief. Deference and support to brahmans, acceptance of one's caste, public participation in traditional rituals, festivals and pilgrimages, and the propitiation of familial or local deities remained of the essence. As already noted, concepts like those of *dharma*, *karma* and the transmigration of souls, though originally aired in the *Upanishads* and nowadays considered quintessentially Hindu, had hitherto been more zealously championed by the Buddhists. To the Buddhist practice of erecting and adorning stupas of dressed stone have also been traced the first experiments in stone architecture and in the devotional use of sculptural iconography. Only after achieving remarkable expertise in the portrayal of the Buddha figure and of

animal and human, mainly female, figures did the stonemasons of Mathura and elsewhere turn to producing images of the deities of the orthodox 'Hindu' pantheon.

How the personae of these deities, especially Vishnu, Shiva and various forms of the mother-goddess, emerged – or converged (for all were composites) – and how they eventually displaced most of the earlier Vedic deities is not well-documented. Vedic sacrifices like the *aswamedha* remained essential to kingship during and long after the Gupta age, but from about this time onwards 'we do not come across the case of a single individual ascribing his greatness or luck to a Vedic deity'.¹⁸ Personal seals found in Bihar and UP usually bear the emblems of either Shiva or Vishnu, and the inscriptions of nearly all the dynasties of the age protest their devotion to some form of these same two deities. Indeed the convergence of the various Shaiva and Vaishnava personae, as well as their growing popularity, may have been partly the outcome of dominant dynasties like the Guptas co-opting the resources, divine and supernatural as well as political and economic, of their conquered feudatories.

This certainly seems to have been the case with many of the legends, incarnations, consorts and relatives associated with Vishnu, including his identification with Krishna (the 'Yadava deity') and with Vasudeva and Narayana, all cults which seem to have originated in the Mathura region and western India. In Malwa and central India a more popular Vaishnava cult of the period was that of Vishnu in his *Varaha* incarnation as a colossal wild boar who, not unlike King Kong, hoists to safety a small and naked nymph representing the earth. The famous fifth-century sculptural repre-

The Huns devastated NW India so badly in the 6th century that 150 years later Chinese tourists only found anarchy and depopulated ruins. Elsewhere, Indian kings had more success, with their own incarnation of Aetius.

asties which are known to have succeeded the Guptas and which, from their charters, may appear even to have outdone the Guptas. Some will be noted later. Here it is sufficient to mention that several claim to have turned the tide of Hun incursion. It will be recalled that from Gandhara the Huns had been rampaging across the Panjab and as far as Malwa since c500. In the north-west the great Buddhist establishments at Taxila, Peshawar and Swat suffered severely from their iconoclasm. Where Fa Hian in the fifth century had found packed viharas and towering stupas, Hsuan Tsang, another Chinese visitor but in the mid-seventh century, found only devastation. Taxila's monasteries were 'ruinous and deserted, and there are very few priests; the royal family being extinct, the nobles contend for power by force'. In Swat some fourteen hundred Buddhist establishments were 'now generally waste and desolate', their eighteen thousand monks having dwindled to a handful.⁴ Buddhism in the Indus basin would never recover from this blow; nor, until the advent of Islam, would the overland trade with China and the west. Although Hsuan Tsang found some commercial activity in Kabul, his omission of any mention of markets or trade in connection with Taxila and Peshawar is significant. The lifeblood of the region had dried up, and with it the all-important supply of equine bloodstock from central Asia to India. Henceforth horses reached India mainly by sea from Arabia, in a trade which would rapidly become a Muslim monopoly. Other frontier trails, like the pilgrim's calvary that had been the Karakoram route, fell into disuse as Buddhist traffic shifted east to the Tibetan tableland.

The rest of India was spared from the Hun perhaps thanks to one Yasodharman of Malwa. Evidently a very successful adventurer

if not a noted dynast, Yasodharman claims to have inflicted a defeat on the Huns in c530. Under their leader Mihirakula, the son of Toramana, the Huns then retired to Kashmir, there in a land of sad but incomparable beauty to burnish their reputation for persecution, vandalism and unspeakable atrocities for another generation.

Victories over the Huns are also claimed by Baladitya, a later Gupta, and by the Maukharis and the Vardhanas. The Maukharis, comprising one or more dynasties, had established themselves in central Uttar Pradesh with their capital at Kanauj on the upper Ganga (near Kanpur). Thereby dominating an important slice of the Guptas' erstwhile *arya-varta*, they would provide a thread of legitimacy for the next and arguably the last north Indian *cakravartin*. This was the great Harsha of the Vardhana family from Thanesar near Delhi. The Vardhanas and the Maukharis were already closely allied and may have repelled the Huns in unison. Their territories, too, marched with one another; conjoined, they would soon form the nucleus of Harsha's great empire.

But before returning to the dynastic fray, and lest the charters of the sixth century be dismissed simply as copper-red herrings, it is worth considering the information they provide not only about their royal donors but also about their beneficiaries and about the nature of the grants themselves. To the economic, as opposed to the dynastic, historian these are of great significance since they foreshadow a fragmentation and dispersal of resources far more ominous than what Kosambi calls the 'nice but meaningless' litany of dynasties.

Munificence was incumbent on any ruler and was an essential attribute of kingship; indeed a particularly generous sovereign is

Indian maritime influence in SE Asia included founding kingdoms in Cambodia and Indonesia, and spreading Hindu and Buddhist culture

bridging role between the Indian subcontinent and the Indic kingdoms of south-east Asia. No region or dynasty of India had a monopoly of south-east Asian contacts. We know that Bengal had regular contacts with both mainland south-east Asia and its archipelago; Fa Hian sailed for Indonesia or Malaya from the Bengali port of Tamralipti, and many Chinese and south-east Asian Buddhists reached the great university of Nalanda in Bihar via the same port. Orissan influences have also been traced in Burma and the Indies; failing any better explanation, it is quite possible that 'Kling', the name by which people of Indian origin are still known in Sumatra and parts of Malaysia, derives from 'Kalinga', the ancient Orissan kingdom. Likewise Kerala and Gujarat seem to have had regular contacts with south-east Asia, which with the entry of the Arabs into the carrying trade of the Indian Ocean would be greatly increased.

However, the most pervasive influence in south-east Asia during the fifth to seventh centuries seems to have been that exercised by the Pallavas of Kanchi. In mainland south-east Asia an important new kingdom had begun to emerge in the sixth century. Based in Cambodia, it would soon absorb Funan, the Indic kingdom on the lower Mekong from which it had probably broken away, and would eventually emerge as the great Khmer kingdom of Angkor. Its kings, like many of those of Funan and Champa (another Indic state in Vietnam), almost always bore names ending in '-varman', just like the Pallavas. More significantly, they claimed descent from the union of a local princess with a certain Kambu whose descendants were known as 'Kambujas'.

From this word came 'Cambodia' and 'Khmer'. But the Kambujas,

as both a people and a place, first occur in the epics and the *Puranas* where they are located in the extreme north-west of the Indian subcontinent, a good three thousand kilometres from Cambodia. It has already been suggested that the sacred geography of the Sanskrit classics tended to get replicated as new regions became Sanskritised (e.g. Mathura, Madurai, and Madura in Indonesia). Kambuja's improbable removal from the upper Indus to the lower Mekong looks to be another case in point. Moreover the adoption of Kambu as a common ancestor would seem to show how such transpositions might have come about, with kings as far away as Indo-China laying claim to the legitimacy provided by an adopted Sanskritic forebear. But what is also significant is that this particular myth seems to have been a revision of the story of the brahman Kaundinya and 'Willow-Leaf', his ill-clad local queen. And that in its turn 'shows a certain kinship with the genealogical myth of the Pallavas of Kanchi',¹³ indeed 'is strikingly similar' to it.¹⁴

Indo-China apart, the Pallavas are known to have become involved in dynastic struggles in Sri Lanka, to have developed Mamallapuram as a long-distance trading station, and to have had diplomatic relations with China. No doubt commercial, religious and political factors all played their part in promoting a more direct, if still conjectural, Pallavan influence in the south-east Asian archipelago. An inscription found in Java uses the Pallava script and that island's earliest surviving Hindu temples, small stone-built shrines scattered across the misty highlands of Dieng and Gedong Songo, show clear affinities with the architecture of Mamallapuram.

In Indonesia as in Indo-China important political developments were under way. The eighth century saw the emergence from ob-



scurity of Srivijaya, a maritime power and possibly a dynasty, which would control a seaborne empire stretching from Sumatra to Malaya, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam. In terms of national psyche the watery imperium of Srivijaya is as important to modern Indonesia, itself 'a pelagic state', as is the continental empire of the Mauryas to Indian centralists. Like Cham-pa and Cambodia, Srivijaya was nevertheless a decidedly Indianised polity, although apparently more Buddhist than brahmanical. Its capital, near Palembang in south-eastern Sumatra, looks to have been the place where in the late seventh century I-tsing (I-ching), another Chinese scholar, found a thriving monastic community. From its monks he received preliminary instruction before proceeding on to Bengal and Nalanda. Returning, he lived with the Srivijayan Buddhists for several years as he worked on the translation of texts acquired in India.

Also in the seventh and eighth centuries there arose in central Java the rival, but eventually joint, kingdoms of the Sailendra and Sanjaya. The origins of these dynasties and their relationship with Srivijaya, let alone India, are subjects of much debate; but to one or both of them must be ascribed the first glorious phase of Javanese temple-building which began c780. As in the Deccan and south India, the temples are all clustered within a small compass, here centred on the city of Jogjakarta. Moreover many conform in all but detail to the norms of layout and elevation found at the Pallavan and Chalukyan sites.

The one glowering exception is the sculptural colossus of Borobudur, much the most outstanding if enigmatic example of Indian cultural transference in south-east Asia. As a stepped stupa

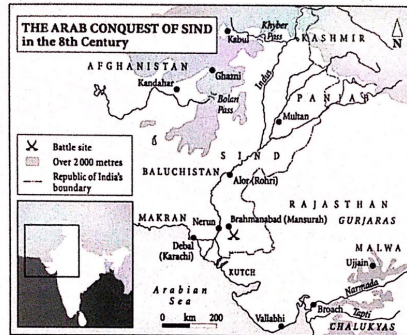
The first successful Islamic invasion of India was a seaborne invasion of Sindh. Religious dissidents aided the Islamic advance. A bloody war ensued, with the Moslems killing the local king and conquering the region by 713.

This time the trouble is specifically attributed to a flagrant act of piracy. A ship from Sri Lanka, whose Basra-bound passengers included a bevy of maidens, had been waylaid off the port-city of Debal (in the vicinity of modern Karachi) by the dreaded Meds. The Meds were pirates while the maidens, all daughters of deceased Muslim merchants, had been intended as a courtesy from the king of Sri Lanka to al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf, the Caliph's governor of Iraq and viceroy for the eastern empire. In what reads like an early-eighth-century version of quarrels which would recur in the late eighteenth century over the policing of the Arabian Sea, al-Hajjaj demanded that King Dahar of Sind secure the release of the maidens. But Dahar, even if willing, was unable to oblige. As he explained, 'They are pirates who have captured these women, and over them I have no authority.'² Unsatisfied with this reply, al-Hajjaj despatched a naval force to Debal. It was defeated and its commander killed. Another armada met a similar fate. Whether or not Dahar took an active part in these skirmishes, he was clearly doing nothing to restrain his coastal subjects. Al-Hajjaj therefore continued to hold him responsible and resolved on the all-out amphibious offensive of c708.

Command of the caliph's forces was given to Muhammad ibn Qasim, al-Hajjaj's cousin and an able leader, who was to be supplied with siege engines by sea and with six thousand crack Syrian troops for the march through Makran. Nothing was left to chance; according to al-Biladuri, one of the earliest Muslim chroniclers, ibn Qasim 'was provided with all he could require, without omitting even thread and needles'. Although apparently just a figure of speech, this reference to needlecraft would be of some significance for Mu-

hammad ibn Qasim.

More immediately the siege engines came into their own. The land forces had effected a rendezvous with the seaborne reinforcements outside Debal, but they were unable to force entry to the city. Even the *manjanik*, a gigantic martinet, or calibrated catapult, which required five hundred men to operate it, was ineffective against Debal's stout walls. But by shortening its chassis so that it aimed high, the *manjanik* was trained on a flagstaff whose bright red flag fluttered defiantly from the top of Debal's temple tower. After no doubt several misses, the *manjanik*-master struck lucky and the flagstaff was shattered, 'at which the idolaters were sore afflicted'. In fact, they threw caution to the wind and, issuing forth to avenge this sacrilege, were easily routed. 'The town was thus taken by assault and the carnage endured for three days,' says al-Biladuri. The temple was partly demolished, its 'priests' (who may have been Buddhists or brahmins) were massacred, and a mosque was laid out for the four-thousand-man garrison which was to remain in Debal.



Meanwhile ibn Qasim moved inland, then up the west bank of the Indus. Some 'Samanis' (presumably *sramanas*, or Buddhist monks) of 'Nerun' (perhaps the Pakistani Hyderabad) were reminded of their vows of non-violence and came to terms with the invader. Thanks to these 'Buddhist fifth-columnists',⁴ as an eminent Indian historian mischievously calls them, Nerun capitulated. On the opposite bank of the river, a despondent Dahar was apparently safe since ibn Qasim seemed unable or unwilling to cross the flood. Eventually orders came from Governor al-Hajjaj in Baghdad to do just that. A bridge of roped boats was assembled on the west

bank. With one end released into the current, it swung into place and the Arabs began crossing immediately.

'The dreadful conflict which followed was such as had never been heard of,' reports al-Biladuri. It does, though, bring to mind Alexander's titanic struggle with Poros; for again the Indian forces displayed exceptional bravery and again the outcome hung in the balance until decided by the ungovernable behaviour of panic-stricken elephants. The beast ridden by Dahar himself, a rather conspicuous albino, was hit by a fire-arrow and plunged into the river. There Dahar made an easy target. He fought on with an arrow in his chest but, dismounting, was eventually struck by a skull-splitting sword blow. It was towards evening, according to al-Biladuri, and when Dahar 'died and went to hell', 'the idolaters fled and the Muslims glutted themselves with massacre'.

Muhammad ibn Qasim then resumed his march upriver. Brahmanabad (the later Mansurah), then Alor (Rohri) and finally Multan, the three principal cities of Sindh, were either captured or surrendered, probably during the years 710-13. Astronomical casualty figures are given, yet both al-Biladuri and the *Chach-nama* agree that ibn Qasim was a man of his word. When he offered, in return for a peaceful surrender, to spare lives and guarantee the safety of temples he was as good as his promise. Hindu and Buddhist establishments were respected 'as if they were the churches of the Christians, the synagogues of the Jews or the fire temples of the Magians [Zoroastrians]'. The *jizya*, the standard poll-tax on all infidels, was imposed; yet brahmins and Buddhist monks were allowed to collect alms, and temples to receive donations. Ibn Qasim was no mindless butcher. When he was disgraced and removed following

The pretty daughters of the dead ruler of Sindh were sent back to the Caliph. When he sought their company, one of the daughters lied and told him that the conqueror of Sindh had already bedded her. The Caliph had his loyal general killed out of jealousy.

the death of his patron al-Hajjaj, it may well be that 'the people of Hind wept'.

Al-Biladuri merely explains that Muhammad ibn Qasim was sent back to Iraq as a prisoner and there tortured to death because of a family feud with the new governor. The *Chach-nama* gives a different story and much more detail. Apparently ibn Qasim had previously captured two of Dahar's virgin daughters and sent them to Baghdad as an adornment to Caliph Walid's seraglio. There one of the young princesses, Suryadevi, caught the caliph's eye; but when he deigned to draw her near, 'she abruptly stood up'. As she very respectfully explained, she felt unworthy of the royal couch since both she and her sister had been similarly favoured in Sind during their detention by Muhammad ibn Qasim. The caliph was not pleased. 'Overwhelmed with love and letting slip the reins of patience', he immediately dictated a missive ordering the perpetrator to 'suffer himself to be sewed up in a hide and sent to the capital'.

The order was obeyed to the letter; the needles and the thread were at last put to good use and ibn Qasim, trussed and labelled, was despatched to Baghdad. Two days into this long and excruciating journey 'he delivered his soul to God and went to the eternal world'. When finally the unsavoury package was delivered to Walid, the princesses were invited to bear witness to the caliph's awesomely impartial justice. Not without glee they surveyed the grisly cadaver and then bravely, if unwisely, revealed that Muhammad ibn Qasim had in fact behaved with perfect propriety.

But he had killed the king of Hind and Sind, destroyed the dominion of our forefathers, and degraded us from the dignity of

NW India after the Huns generated warlike nomadic clans that fiercely resisted Islamic expansion. These clans had a number of names, later becoming the Rajputs that the British admired for their fighting ability.

It is, however, their mortal rivals for supremacy in northern India who have attracted the closest scrutiny by Indian historians. Based in western India at the opposite extremity of *arya-varta*, the Gurjara-Pratiharas have been awarded an imperial sway greater even than Harsha's and a national resolve worthy of the Congress Party. 'They were of the people and did not stand away from their hopes, aspirations and traditions'.¹¹ 'The spearhead of a religious-cultural upsurge', the Gurjara-Pratiharas were 'bulwarks of defence against the vanguards of Islam'¹² and 'protectors of *dharma*'. Yet despite such confident statements, despite comparatively frequent references by Islamic writers, and despite a succession of well attested rulers, the Gurjara-Pratiharas remain as much an enigma as their composite title suggests.

'The king of Jurz maintains numerous forces and no other Indian prince has so fine a cavalry,' reported merchant Suleiman in the ninth century. There was also 'no greater foe of the Muhammadan faith'. Moreover Jurz territory comprised 'a tongue of land', presumably Saurashtra in Gujarat, which if correct provides a clue to the identity of its king. For Jurz, sometimes spelled 'Juzr', is taken to be a variant of 'Gurzara' or 'Gurjara', a place or people visited by Hsuan Tsang and mentioned in several inscriptions, including that of the great Chalukya, Pulakesin II, at Aihole. The same word is today found in 'Gujarat', 'Gujanwala' and numerous other place-names

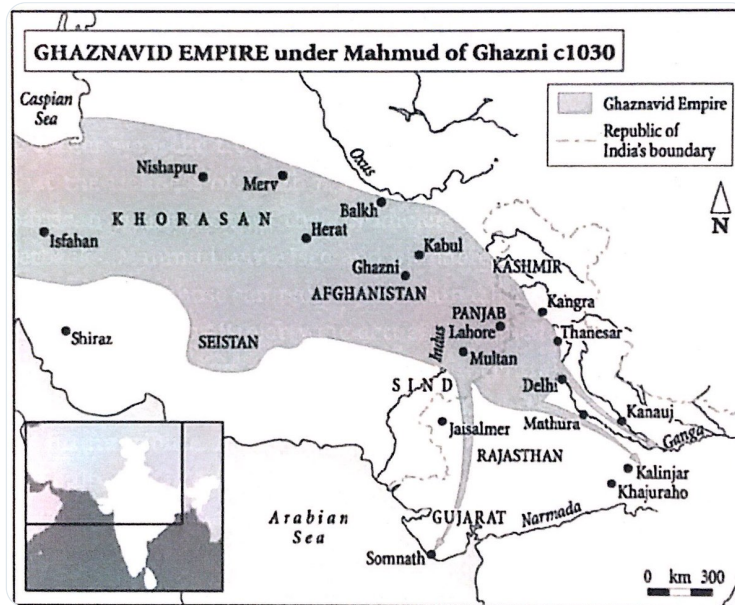
as well as in 'Gujars', a ubiquitous community of pastoralists frequenting many parts of the Panjab from the north-west frontier to Uttar Pradesh. This trail of 'Guj-' words suggests that the Gurjaras, or Jurz people, had been on the move. Some suppose that they originated beyond the north-west frontier and moved into the Panjab and then western India in the wake of the Hun invasions. Others suppose that any such migration was more probably in reverse, that they originated in western India and then moved north.

Al-Masudi, writing in the early tenth century, has little to say of Jurz but makes much of 'the Bauura, king of Kanauj'. His forces were reckoned at an incredible three million, and were divided into four armies, one to engage the Arabs of Multan, another to deal with the Balhara (i.e. the Rashtrakutas) and the other two 'to meet enemies in any direction'. Such a description could only apply to the Pratiharas, a late-eighth- to tenth-century dynasty known to have wrested Kanauj from the Palas and to have been occasionally humbled by the Rashtrakutas. And since the Pratiharas are known to have originated in Rajasthan, whence one branch of the family had first set up in a kingdom in Gujarat, it is now generally accepted that Jurz and the Gurjaras refer to kingdoms and rulers closely related to the Bauura and the Pratiharas. In fact the Pratiharas are taken to be one of several Gurjara clans and are hence known as the 'Gurjara-Pratiharas'.

The subject is of more than passing interest because the Pratiharas and their descendants are often numbered amongst those more famous clans known as Rajputs. In the centuries immediately preceding and following the Muslim conquest of India, the Rajputs were destined to play an often heroic and always pivotal role. Their

Mahmud of Ghazni's father had gained a base east of the Hindu Kush. From this base, Mahmud launched 17 invasions of India from 1001 to 1030, devastating and

plundering much of Northern India. His destruction of Hindu temples makes him a hated figure among Hindus.



Prithviraj III led a mighty Hindu kingdom which pressed on the declining Moslem states in Pakistan in the late 12th century. His enemy Muhammed of Ghor suffered several setbacks, and the Hindus failed to press on and destroy the Moslems

In the mid-twelfth century Vighraha-raj, one of Ajaya-raj's successors, greatly extended the dynasty's sway by pushing northwards into what is now Haryana and what remained outside Ghaznavid rule of the eastern Panjab. Delhi, too, fell to Vighraha-raj, and to record this brilliant campaign he added his own inscriptions to those of Ashoka on one of the latter's still-standing pillars. By a strange coincidence the pillar he chose was the one, then located higher up the Jamuna, which two centuries later would be so laboriously shipped downriver for re-erection in Delhi. There, fortuitously relocated in the heart of the city to which he had laid claim, it records Vighraha-raj's conquest of the whole region up to the Himalayas and also mentions frequent exterminations of the *mlechhas*, presumably a reference to conflicts with the declining Ghaznavids. Another inscription speaks of his having thereby made *arya-varta* 'once more the abode of the *arya*'.

Vighraha-raj died c.1165. The Chahamanas succession then became convoluted until Prithviraj III ascended the throne of Ajmer twelve years later. Evidently a minor at the time, he seems to have celebrated his coming of age by eloping with the daughter of the king of Kanauj. This much-loved romance is told in some detail by the unreliable Chand. On the other hand the young Lochinvar's ambitious *digvijaya* of c.1182 is shrouded in uncertainty. It seems to have brought him into conflict with, amongst others, the Chandelas and their allies and also the Solanki rajputs of Gujarat. In all such en-

counters he is said to have fared well and, according to another popular narrative of the period, he waxed strong enough to vow next to extirpate his *mlechha* neighbours in the Panjab.

In this he was emboldened by the decline of the Ghaznavids and the rather unimpressive showing so far made by Muhammad of Ghor. From Ghazni the Ghorid had first turned his attentions to Sind, routing the restored Ismaili ruler of Multan and eventually pushing down the Indus to Mansurah and Debal. He had thence attempted to attack the Solankis of Gujarat by crossing the Thar desert in imitation of Mahmud's raid on Somnath. He even invited the young Prithviraj to support him in this venture. Prithviraj declined and briefly considered joining his Solanki rival to eject the *Turuskas*. But in the event this proved unnecessary, for the Ghorids were roundly defeated in Gujarat. Muhammad thereupon abandoned the idea of a trans-Thar invasion and directed his attention north-east to Lahore. Having secured that place in 1186-7, he was ready to meet Prithviraj's challenge. Along a Panjabi frontier not dissimilar to today's Indo-Pakistan border, 'the Ghorid and the Chahamanas now stood face to face. The Muslim knew that the wealth of the rich cities and temples in the Jamuna-Ganga valley and beyond could only be secured by the destruction of the Hindu power which held the key to the Delhi gate.'⁴

Twentieth-century parallels with a situation in which Sind and Gujarat lay divided from one another by religion, and the Panjab in effect partitioned between Muslim and Hindu rulers, are hard to overlook. Pakistanis may take comfort from the fact that this division had already subsisted for nearly two hundred years in the case of the Panjab and for over four hundred in the case of Sind/Gujarat.

To what extent religion was uppermost in the mind of either Prithviraj or Muhammad of Ghor when first they met is therefore debatable. In 1191 Muhammad took the offensive by storming a fort in the Panjab which is thought to have been either that of Sirhind near Patiala or of Bhatinda near the current Indo-Pakistan frontier. The fort was taken; but Prithviraj hastened to its rescue

and, at a place called Tarain near Thanesar (about 150 kilometres north of Delhi), he was intercepted by the main Ghorid army.

The ensuing battle is described as having been decided by a personal contest between Muhammad of Ghor and Govinda-raj of Delhi, who was Prithviraj's vassal. Govinda lost his front teeth to the Ghorid's lance but then took fearful revenge with a spear that struck the latter's upper arm. Barely able to keep his seat, Muhammad was saved by 'a lion-hearted warrior, a Khalji stripling' who leapt up behind him in the saddle and piloted him from the battlefield. Seeing this, many of Muhammad's troops feared the worst; they believed their leader to be dead and so broke off the encounter. Had the Chahamanas forces taken advantage of the situation, it might have become a rout. But Prithviraj, fresh from the ritualistic manoeuvres of a conventional *digvijaya*, mistook retreat for an admission of defeat. Ignorant of the advice once given by 'Bhimpal', it was as though he rejoiced over the capture of a hill and bothered not with the rest of the range. The Muslim forces were allowed to withdraw in good order. Prithviraj then ordered his army forward to

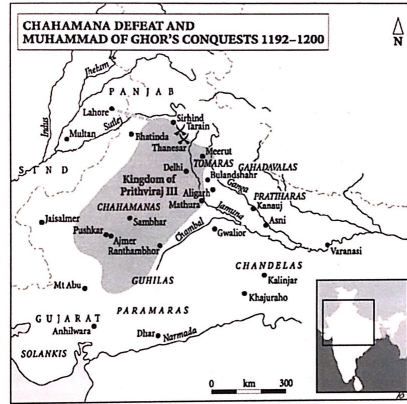
a laborious siege of the Sirhind/Bhatinda fort.

Muhammad withdrew to Ghazni to convalesce and assemble

Mohammed of Ghor returned a year later with a new army of Afghans, Persians, Arabs, and Turks for jihad. The Hindu princes all rallied to form an army under Prithviraj. At the 2nd Battle of Tarain, the Moslems won and captured Prithviraj, leaving the rest of India exposed.

Muhammad withdrew to Ghazni to convalesce and assemble more troops. The Ghorid forces included Afghans, Persians and Arabs, but the most numerous and effective contingents were of Turkic stock. Meanwhile those who had fled the field at Tarain were obliged to don their horses' nosebags and tread the thoroughfares of Ghazni munching on grain. By mid-1192 Muhammad was back in the Panjab at the head of 120,000 horse and with an uncompromising ultimatum for the king of Ajmer: apostasise or fight. Prithviraj returned 'a haughty answer': he would not capitulate nor

would he embrace Islam but, if Muhammad was having second thoughts, he was willing to consider a truce.



Endearingly susceptible to the perquisites of power, Prithviraj is said to have been enjoying himself since his earlier victory. He was still in his mid-twenties and, returning now to the fortunate field of Tarain at the head of an army said to have comprised 300,000 horse, he was in an even better position to dispose of the Ghorid challenge.

If Ferishta was right about his 150 royal vassals – and translator Briggs about their being 'Rajput princes' – he headed the most formidable rajput confederacy on record. Tod, despite his insistence on the rajputs' chronic disunity, seems to agree: 'Pirthi-raj' was now 'the ruler of Rajasthan'; and amongst those 'Rajput princes' who supposedly flocked to his standard was Tod's particular hero, the Guhila ruler of distant Mewar (later capital Udaipur) in southern Rajasthan.

From Ferishta's much later and, it must be said, suspiciously detailed account there also comes evidence of trickery. Muhammad allegedly responded to Prithviraj's suggestion of a truce with a letter couched in terms sufficiently ambiguous to give the Indians cause for celebration. 'The letter produced the intended effect; for the enemy, conceiving that Muhammad was intimidated, spent the night in riot and revelry, while he was preparing to surprise them.' When they awoke, late and in urgent need of ablutions, they found the Ghorid forces already entering their lines. The battle thus began amidst some confusion. Only Muhammad had a plan: like the great Mahmud he would launch wave after wave of mounted archers, but not try to force the Indian position, and in fact withdraw as the Indians' elephant-phalanx advanced. Prithviraj, happy with this apparent success, duly advanced. But the buffeting assaults of the Turkish horse took their toll of the all-night revellers; sore rajput heads began to droop, and the scent of morning victory soured as the day wore on. By sunset Muhammad was ready to strike back.

Thinking he had sufficiently worn out the enemy and deluded them with a hope of victory, he put himself at the head of

twelve thousand of his best horse, whose riders were covered with steel armour, and making one desperate charge, carried death and destruction through the Hindu ranks. The disorder increased everywhere until at length the panic became general. The Muslims, as if they only now began to be in earnest, committed such havoc that this [Prithviraj's] prodigious army, once shaken, like a great building tottered to its fall and was lost in its ruins.²

Govinda-raj of Delhi, the hero of the first battle at Tarain, was slain; his body was recognised by its missing teeth. Slain too was the Guhila king Samatasimha, Tod's 'Ulysses of the Rajput host'. In all 100,000 are said to have been sent to their death. Prithviraj was taken prisoner and would soon join them.

The 1192 rout of the rajputs at Tarain is arguably the most decisive battle in the history of India. Prithviraj had succeeded in uniting at least some of the rajput princes and in cordoning off the Islamised Panjab. The blood-and-plunder raids had been stopped. But this interdiction had served only to increase the pressure for a more decisive encounter. The Ghorids rose to the challenge because for them, as for their Indian contemporaries, plunder was a necessity.

Prithviraj had upped the stakes, and he paid the price. When the Chahamanas army succumbed, it became painfully clear that his earlier successes had only made his eventual failure all the more catastrophic. The 'key to the Delhi gate', indeed to the whole of *arya-varta*, now belonged to Muhammad of Ghor and his victorious Turks.

Muhammed of Ghor was too distracted by affairs in Punjab and Central Asia to conquer India. His Turkish soldiers raided into India & carved out their own kingdoms. Their early rule wasn't as bad as it would later become.

THE SLAVE KINGS

Within a year of the victory at Tarain, Muhammad of Ghor's forces had taken Delhi, plus Meerut, Kol (Aligarh) and Baran (Bulandshahr), commanding the upper Ganga-Jamuna Doab. Ajmer was also under Ghorid control, and within another three years much of *arya-varta* shared its fate. Of the three great natural fortresses screening Rajasthan and the routes south, Ranthambhor had been won, Gwalior assailed and Narwar targeted. To the east, after another decisive battle, Kanauj, Asni and Varanasi on the Ganga had also been overrun; and in the south-west, following victory at Mount Abu over a western rajput combination, the Gujarati capital of Anhilwara (Patan) had been sacked. The thirteenth century opened with even more sensational conquests as Muslim forces pushed further east into Bihar, Bengal and Assam; others moved into the Chandela country south of the Ganga and captured, amongst many, the stronghold of Kalinjar. On paper the Ghorid empire in India already exceeded that of Harsha.

Given, however, their predatory imperative, many of these conquests were temporary. Ajmer and Ranthambhor, for instance, changed hands several times; Gwalior and Kalinjar were lost shortly after they were won; Anhilwara was evacuated as soon as it was sacked. In some cases existing rulers were reinstated but then renounced their submission once the *Turuskas* had departed or further support had been recruited. In other instances, most notably in Bengal, the victorious *Turuska* generals would soon themselves re-

nounce their allegiance to Delhi. It would be a characteristic of the Muslim advance that most major cities and forts were taken and then retaken, sometimes four or five times, before their fate was finally decided.

Nor can many of these early successes be attributed to Muhammad of Ghor himself. Soon after the second battle of Tarain he returned to Ghazni and, although he paid subsequent visits to India, it was the more pressing affairs of central Asia which commanded his attention. There, at the instigation of the Baghdad caliph, the Ghorids had by 1201 won another empire. Like that of the Ghaznavids it reached west to the Caspian, and as before, the wide-open spaces of Khorasan were soon proving harder to hold than to win. Within a matter of months the Ghorids had been ejected by the Turkic rulers of Khwarasm, or Khiva (on the lower Oxus), who were themselves soon to be ejected by an even more formidable horde, alien and infidel to boot, under Ghenghiz Khan.

Reeling from the heaviest of defeats in north-west Afghanistan, Muhammad found Ghor itself in danger and his lines of communication from Ghazni to Lahore under threat from a Panjabi hill-tribe known as the Ghakkars. By 1206 he had suppressed this revolt, but during a dark and sultry night a party of vengeful Ghakkars somehow penetrated his camp on the banks of the Jhelum and 'sheathed their daggers in the King's body'. 'Thus fell Sultan Moyiz-ood-Deen Muhammad Ghor after a reign of thirty-two years,' notes Ferishta.

Rarely the work of Muhammad himself, his conquests in India had been principally achieved by his Turkish commanders, amongst whom the most successful was Qutb-ud-din Aybak (Aibak, Eibek). Aybak was also the most trusted and, since Mu-

Given that the Muslim conquest of India took several centuries, all generalisations must be suspect. The well-authenticated oppression of Muhammad bin Tughluq in the mid-fourteenth century cannot simply be presumed of his predecessors or his successors. Similarly a Hindu inscription of c1280 which lauds the security and bounty enjoyed under the rule of Sultan Balban should not be taken as a blanket endorsement of firm Islamic government. Not all temples were destroyed, although many were. The *jizya* tax on non-Muslims was not levied on brahmins until the reign of Feroz Shah Tughluq (1351–88),¹² and may never have been very effectively collected. Idolatry was condemned yet Hindus were not prevented from practising their religion. And since the records often make no clear distinction between military and civilian casualties, it is hard to assess the extent of gratuitous violence.

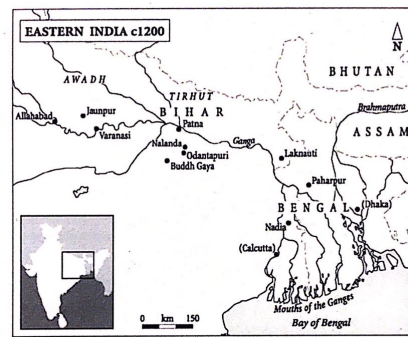
hammad had no sons, he looked to be his likeliest successor. Not without the bloody elimination of rivals which accompanied almost every succession of a Delhi sultan, Aybak eventually secured his position in India and would no doubt have made as great a sovereign as he had a viceroy. But in 1210, after just four years on the throne, he fell while playing polo, and his pony fell on top of him 'so that the pommel of the saddle entered his chest and killed him'. He is remembered as the founder of what is sometimes called the 'Slave Dynasty' of Delhi, and as the creator of that city's earliest surviving Islamic monuments, the so-called Qutb mosque and minar.

Like the nearly contemporary slave, or Mameluke, rulers of Egypt, the 'Slave Kings' of Delhi were anything but servile. The term simply indicates that, as one-time captives, they had once been slaves. In fact they may even have found this station to their advantage. In a court awash with intrigue and opportunity, India's Turkish conquistadors regarded a slave's loyalty as more dependable than that of their own kin. Purchased, rapidly promoted, eventually freed, and still highly trusted, the erstwhile slave of a royal patron was ideally placed to act as either power-broker or pretender. Aybak would be succeeded, after a brief interlude of confusion, by Shams-ud-din Iltutmish, another ex-slave of Turkic extraction. That no stigma attached to either of them is clear from Aybak's recognition as sultan by his titular superior in Ghazni, and from Iltutmish's yet grander recognition by the caliph himself.

Their elevated status is equally proclaimed by their monuments. The Qutb mosque in Delhi boasts a tower of victory which doubles as India's, and perhaps Islam's, most massive minaret. Five balconied tiers tall, many of them fluted and the whole thing heav-

The new Turkish rulers of northern India endlessly feuded with themselves, and were greatly aided by large numbers of Moslem refugees to India fleeing the Mongols. Delhi aspired to the paramount Moslem state in India.

Many would argue that the sultans, like other Indian dynasts, were more interested in power and plunder than in religion. Muslim chroniclers chose to portray the occupation of northern India as a religious offensive and to paint its principals as religious heroes; 'but such a view cannot stand the test of historical scrutiny'.¹³ The more informative chroniclers in fact say surprisingly little about Muslim – Hindu relations. They are much more revealing about the power struggles amongst the conquistadors themselves; indeed these feuds, together with the chaos induced by the Mongol invasions, look to have slowed the pace of conquest quite as much as any resurgence of Hindu resistance. According to one authority the entire history of the ruling Turkish elite 'can be summed up in these words; they united to destroy their enemies and disunited to destroy themselves'.¹⁴



During the twenty-six years of his reign Iltutmish was almost continuously in the field, yet beyond raids into Malwa he brought little new territory within the Muslim ambit and was as often engaged against fellow Muslims as against Indian 'idolaters'. In the west, Sind and the Panjab were in constant turmoil as Ghenghiz Khan neared and then crossed the Indus in 1222. The turmoil was caused not just by the Mongols themselves but by the tide of armies, princes, scholars and artisans from all over Turkestan, Khorasan and Afghanistan whom the Mongol invaders rolled before them. Figures are not available but it seems probable that far more Mus-

lims entered India as refugees from the Mongol invasions than as warriors in the Ghaznavid and Ghori armies combined.

East of Delhi Iltutmish had to reconquer much of what is now Uttar Pradesh and then face Muslim rivals in Bihar and Bengal. These were the Khaljis or Khiljis, originally tribal neighbours of the Ghorids in central Afghanistan, who had followed Muhammad of Ghor to India. Muhammad Bakhtiyar, the founder of Khalji rule, had been denied lucrative office in both Ghazni and Delhi before eventually securing what was then a frontier fief (*iqta*) near Varanasi. Thence he organised freelance raids into Bihar, one of which was rewarded with the unexpectedly easy capture of what the Khaljis thought was a fortified city. Here the inhabitants, all of whom seemed to have shaven heads, were indeed put to death and great plunder was made. Amongst the spoils were whole libraries of books but, since all the people had been killed, no one could tell what the books were about. Further investigation, however, clarified the situation. According to Minhaj-ud-Din Siraj, a distinguished scholar who after being flushed out of Afghanistan by the Mongols spent two years with the Khaljis, 'it was then discovered that the whole fort and city was a place of study';¹⁵ it was in fact the famous Buddhist monastery-cum-university of Odantapuri.

Such fearless feats of arms won the applause of Qutb-ud-din Aybak and brought followers flocking to the Khalji standard. Bakhtiyar had then ventured through south Bihar and, in another daring escapade, captured Nadia, the capital of the Senas, which dynasty had succeeded that of the Buddhist Palas as the most important in Bengal. With just eighteen followers Bakhtiyar is supposed to have gained entrance to the Sena palace and surprised

King Lakshmanasena in the middle of lunch. The Senas' other capital of Lakhnauti, otherwise Gaur on what is now the Indo-Bangladesh frontier, was also taken. With Lakhnauti as his headquarters, Bakhtiyar continued east into Assam and then 'Tibet' – which was probably not the country now so designated but perhaps Bhutan. However, the Himalayas were certainly too physically challenging for the Khalji forces, most of whom perished in a swollen river. Bakhtiyar made it back to the plains but, a broken man, he either died or was killed soon after.

This was in 1205, and from then onwards the governorship of Bengal and Bihar had been bitterly contested by various Khaljis who acknowledged Delhi's supremacy only on the rare occasions when the sultan's support was deemed personally advantageous. Iltutmish endeavoured to rectify the situation by invading Bengal in 1225. Its incumbent Khalji was obliged 'to place the yoke of servitude on the neck of submission' and yield a hefty tribute; then he reverted to his bad old ways. A year later the sultan sent his son Nasir-ud-din to repeat the treatment. This time the Khaljis were routed, their ruler killed and their capital occupied; the problem looked to be solved. But such calculations took no account of Bengal's notorious climate. Nasir-ud-din suddenly sickened and died. Again Bengal, that 'hell full of good things' as the Mughals would call it, slipped the leash and again (in 1229) Iltutmish had to invade. His settlement barely lasted until his death, whereupon Bengal, Bihar and sometimes Awadh became again effectively independent. Although over the succeeding century this situation was occasionally threatened and briefly reversed, 'between 1338 and 1538, for long two hundred years, Bengal remained independent without

One Sultan of Delhi was toppled by his sister. She ruled 4 years, dressed provocatively, and had a black boyfriend. Turks didn't like this, toppled her, & killed her boyfriend. She married one of his killers and they were killed by Hindus while trying to retake the throne.

too may have been the appointment as 'personal attendant to her majesty' of Jamal-ud-din Yakut, an 'Abyssinian' who was probably once a slave and very definitely an African. A liaison so conspicuous duly brought unfavourable comment from the historian Isami. Declaring that a woman's place was 'at her spinning wheel [*charkha*]' and that high office would only derange her, he insisted that Raziya should have made 'cotton her companion and grief her wine-cup'.

Delhi's chances of reasserting its authority there or anywhere else declined sharply after Iltutmish. Before dying of natural causes, a feat which even contemporary writers found worthy of special note, Iltutmish had wavered between nominating as his successor a remaining but ineffectual son and an inspirational but gender-handicapped daughter. The son, though liked, had his own handicaps, including a vindictive and detested mother and a predilection to 'licentiousness and debauchery'. Mother and son duly indulged their respective passions during a seven-month period. It barely qualified as a reign, and they were both then toppled by the daughter, the redoubtable Raziya.

Sultan Raziya was a great monarch. She was wise, just and generous, a benefactor to her kingdom, a dispenser of justice, the protector of her subjects, and the leader of her armies. She was endowed with all the qualities befitting a king, but she was not born of the right sex, and so in the estimation of men all these virtues were worthless. (May God have mercy on her!)¹²

Nevertheless, continued Minhaj-us Siraj, 'the country under Sultan Raziya enjoyed peace and the power of the state was manifest'; even Bengal made a grudging submission. This was short-lived, and the calm merely presaged a storm. Raziya's reign lasted barely four years (1236–40). Perhaps her decision to dispense with the veil and, in mannish garb of coat and cap, to 'show herself amongst the people' was unnecessarily provocative to Muslim sensitivities. So

Raziya was elbowed aside by a junta of Turkish, and of course male, chauvinists. While bravely dashing across the Panjab in high summer to douse a revolt at Bhatinda, she was isolated by the conspirators, her Abyssinian friend was killed, and she ended a prisoner in the fort she had come to redeem. There she managed to win the backing and affection of one of the conspirators. They were married and, gathering further support, marched on Delhi. Perhaps if the conduct of their forces had been left to the experienced Raziya, they might have prevailed. But, as a wife, she deferred to her husband and they were heavily defeated. Next day, while fleeing the battlefield, the newlyweds 'fell into the hands of Hindus and were killed'.

Known as 'The Forty' or 'The Family of Forty', the Turkish military oligarchs who now dominated Delhi affairs intrigued both against one another and against a more amorphous grouping composed of Indian converts to Islam and eminent refugees from Afghanistan and beyond. At the whim of these cut-throat god-fathers young and ineffectual sultans were casually summoned and quickly despatched, usually to the hereafter.

Raziya's demise had been followed almost immediately by another Mongol eruption. In 1241 the invaders sacked Lahore, whose ruins were then picked over by the predatory Ghakkars. Unlike

The Islamic sultanates were ruled by a narrow elite of Moslem Persian, Afghan, and Turk origin. They staffed their administrations, armies, and clergy with immigrants of the same origins. Banking, trade, and industry all remained in Hindu hands.

Under threat of invasion from them, Delhi was now just one of many, often more innovative and illustrious, power centres. If in pre-Islamic times the division of the subcontinent into strong independent states based on ancient identities of lineage, language, dynastic tradition and economic interest was the norm, then India was simply reverting to type.

Despite two centuries of dominance in most of northern and western India, the sultanate had failed to establish a pan-Indian supremacy, and had not even attempted an Indo-Islamic accommodation. True, in the cities the Hindu population had come to terms with their Muslim overlords: some enterprises, like the royal mints, remained exclusively in Hindu hands; many Muslims took Hindu wives; Indian captives often converted to Islam; and some converts had achieved high office. Yet in Delhi, as in the sultanate's provincial capitals, the court remained largely a preserve of the Turkish, Persian and Afghan elites. The same was true of membership of the *ulema*, of senior posts in the administration, and of much of the military. Ethnic as much as religious exclusivity made the Delhi regime totally alien to most of India's peoples.

Arriving at Multan, then the frontier city of Muhammad bin Tughluq's kingdom, in 1333, Ibn Batuta had observed how other new arrivals from west and central Asia all sought recruitment into the sultan's service. Most were mounted and, as *sowars* (troopers), they had to perform some equestrian manoeuvres before being enrolled in the armed forces. Others sought royal patronage as artisans, scholars, merchants or administrators. Very few looked beyond such patronage. Most trade, most industry and all financial services remained in Hindu hands. But as the English 'nabobs' of

the eighteenth century would discover, this could be mutually advantageous. Ibn Batuta noted how Hindu banking houses in Multan grew wealthy by advancing to penniless hopefuls from central Asia such gifts as were suitable for presentation to the sultan – horses, slaves, brocades, jewels. The sultan invariably returned a far more valuable present from which the newcomer could repay with interest the Delhi agents of his Multani backer. It was official policy to encourage a stream of immigration; and such were the opportunities offered by India and such the turmoil elsewhere in Asia that the flood of adventurers from all over the Islamic world rarely dried up.

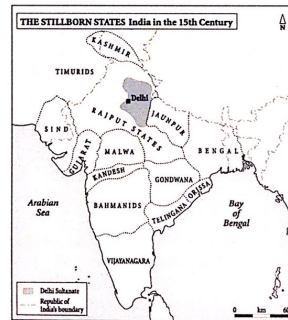
Ibn Batuta found that in Delhi most newcomers expected 'to gain riches and then return to their countries'¹² – again just like the eighteenth-century English 'nabobs'. As Delhi's authority declined, aggressive new sultanates on India's Islamic frontier in Bengal, Gujarat, Malwa and the Deccan boosted the market for military personnel and offered even better prospects for plunder, promotion and remunerative revenue assignments. In fact these independent sultanates had by the fifteenth century become the real lands of opportunity. Scholars, jurists and artisans gravitated towards the more generous patronage on offer. Merchants readily took to supplying and servicing the lucrative Arabian Sea trade from the peninsula's west coast ports. It was by way of sailings from the Red Sea that Gujarat acquired a large community of African Muslims. Meanwhile the influx of Persians and Afghans into the Deccan would give to the Bahmanid sultanate and its successors a strongly Persian and Shi'ite flavour. This would survive into the twentieth century in the case of Hyderabad, one of these successor states.

Indian nation-states began to form in the 15th century.

STILLBORN STATES

The number of states which emerged from the collapse of the Delhi sultanate, not to mention the complexity of their mutual relations, could warrant a long narrational stride onto the *terra firma* of Mughal India. But it would be wrong to diminish the political importance of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. In Europe the period witnessed the emergence of those strong, centralised and mostly monarchical states which would become the basic units of European history. Something very similar appeared

to be underway in India: Bengal, Gujarat, Kashmir, Orissa, the south and various parts of central India began to forge the territorial, political and cultural identities associated with the concept of a nation-state. But whereas not even the most committed European federationist would dismiss Scotland or the Netherlands, let alone France or Spain, as 'regional' aberrations, such has been India's subsequent experience of subcontinental hegemonies, and such today is Delhi's and Islamabad's paranoia about secessionist movements, that 'regions' is how these entities are designated. The recollection of their independent status is not much promoted. The nation-state in pre-colonial India would indeed be stillborn; yet the fact of its being born at all is significant.



14th and 15th century Moslem-Hindu condominiums developed in areas with few foreign settlers as the Moslem rulers (occasionally native converts) needed local support.

SWINGING IN THE WIND

Such Bahmanid pre-eminence would not have been conceded by the sultans of Gujarat and Malwa. A latecomer compared with Vijayanagar or the Bahmanids, Gujarat became independent when its governor, the son of a rajput convert to Islam, assumed sovereignty after Timur's invasion in the early years of the fifteenth century. At about the same time Malwa followed suit under its erstwhile governor Dilawar Khan Ghorī. Dilawar Khan was presumably a Turco-Afghan Ghorid but he quickly signified a more conciliatory attitude to idolaters by encouraging rajput settlement and creating what was in effect a Muslim – rajput condominium. Gujarat's sultans too, although more orthodox and credited with imposing the *jizya* and demolishing Hindu temples, habitually married rajput princesses, patronised Indian artists and Sanskrit scholars, and employed Hindus in the highest offices of state. Also prominent in both sultanates, and especially in their respective revenue departments, were Jains, whose survival in western India belied their near-extinction in the rest of the subcontinent.

the eyes of the Delhi *ulema* the orthodoxy of the house of Hasan, alias Gungu Bahman Shah, was clearly compromised.

Ferishta's account of the Bahmanids is initially one of almost continuous conflict with their Hindu neighbours, most notably various rulers in what is now Andhra Pradesh plus the kings of Vijayanagar. Major wars with Vijayanagar's Bukka, who succeeded his brother Harihara, and then with Bukka's successors, Harihara II and Deva Raya I and II, are seen as triumphs for the Bahmanid sultans who repeatedly threatened the city of Vijayanagar itself. They also carried off hoards of treasure and massacred wholly incredible numbers of idolaters; as a noted authority on the Bahmanids has calculated, 'if we were to add together the casualties inflicted on the Hindus by the Muslims as given by our Indo-Persian chronicles, there would not have been a Hindu left alive in the Deccan'.¹⁸ Rather fewer Muslim warriors 'drank the sherbet of martyrdom', as Ferishta puts it, but 'without an influx from overseas it was the Muslims', according to Professor Sherwani, 'who were in danger of dying out.' Mass conversions are not mentioned until the very end of Bahmanid rule, no doubt because Bahman Shah had rejected any idea of imposing the *jizya* on his Hindu subjects.

The Afghan warlords who ruled northern India fought each other, and left Punjab and the entrance to India undefended in the 15th and early 16th centuries

promised and which the finest natural frontiers in India seemingly guaranteed.

It was a different story in the neighbouring Panjab. Here evidence of nation-state-building is notably lacking. Timur's Mongol descendants continued to nurse claims to the lands which he had traversed and conquered *en route* to Delhi in 1398. Meanwhile Afghan adventurers continued to migrate to and through the Panjab in large numbers. By the late fifteenth century the Afghan Lodis exercised desultory control from Delhi. But so heavily engaged was the Lodi sultan with rivals elsewhere that his governor in the Panjab enjoyed near independence. No obdurate dynasty like the Shahis stood between the undefended north-west frontier and the temptations of India. No champion like the later Ranjit Singh rose to rally Panjabi loyalty. The gates of Hind were swinging in the wind.

of the superbly fortified palace-citadel at Gwalior itself, the Lodi forces, lacking artillery, proved powerless. At enormous cost the siege dragged on for several years. Worse still, word of the Lodi's discomfiture reached the ear of a young and ambitious new Mongol ruler in Kabul.

Zahir-ud-din Muhammad, otherwise known as Babur or 'the Tiger', was already showing an unhealthy interest in the disturbed affairs of the Panjab, which province bordered his Afghan kingdom and was nominally under Lodi rule. In 1505, the year of the earthquake, he made his first foray across the north-west frontier. It was another omen which the Lodi sultan chose to ignore. Babur drew his own conclusion. As the Lodi's biographer puts it, 'Sikander Lodi, while fighting against the Tomars [i.e. the rajputs of Gwalior], was criminally neglecting the north-west frontier and the Panjab'.²

This state of affairs, if anything, worsened as the strife-torn Lodis squabbled amongst themselves. Twenty years and five exploratory incursions later, Babur would invade in earnest, topple Sikander's successor and, taking both Delhi and Agra, would inaugurate in India a Mongol, or Mughal, empire. Conventionally known in English as that of the Great Mughals, it would wax supreme for two centuries and engross most of the subcontinent. Through the agency of Babur, first of the Great Mughals, the multilateral history of the Indian subcontinent begins to jell into the monolithic history of India.

In his *Babur-nama*, a personal memoir-cum-diary of such disarming frankness that it was once reckoned 'amongst the most enthralling and romantic works in the literature of all time',³ Babur leaps from the page with the zestful energy of a *sowar* (trooper)

Turks (presumably related to modern Uzbeks) rallied to Babur, descendant of Genghis Khan and Timur. His artillery, gunmen, and cavalry made a formidable force

To such an adventurer direction was dictated as much by fate as by forebears. On his mother's side Babur was a distant descendant of Ghenghiz Khan, and on his father's he was a fifth-generation descendant of Timur, he who in 1398 had sacked the Tughluqs' Delhi. This latter conquest would furnish Babur with a cherished but highly dubious claim to legitimate sovereignty in northern India. But India was not his first choice. Nor was Kabul. His inheritance lay much further north beyond the Oxus in Ferghana, a minor kingdom to the east of the modern city of Tashkent. He had been born there in 1484 and, though of Mongol blood, it was in the

Turkic and Islamic milieu of this subordinate kingdom of Timur's erstwhile empire that he was educated. Turki would remain his first language; he even wrote of himself and his followers as Turks. His Islam was a robust, workaday faith tempered more by the winds of circumstance and the exigencies of campaigning than by the niceties of theology. And it was to Samarkand, Timur's capital and the cultural focus of central Asia, that he aspired. Briefly, aged fifteen, he actually occupied it, but was quickly dispossessed by an Uzbek rival. Twice more he would take the city and twice more he would lose it. Kabul, on the other hand, was just a distraction. Yet for a virtual fugitive it offered consolation. From Afghanistan Timur himself had launched his bid for Samarkand and had then gone on to conquer much of Asia. Babur could do worse. In 1504 he crossed the Oxus, then the Hindu Kush, and seized Kabul.

Apart from that one ominous raid across the Indian frontier in 1505, Babur spent the next fourteen years securing his position in Afghanistan and chasing the dream of sovereignty in Samarkand. In his memoir, which was written towards the end of his reign, he insists that 'my desire for Hindustan remained constant'. Yet it was not until 1519 that he resumed the quest and not until 1525 that he launched his successful bid. He did so with a highly mobile force which had shared his exploits in central Asia and which, as it was ferried across the Indus north of Attock, was carefully counted. 'Great and small, good and bad, retainer and non-retainer, [it] was written down as twelve thousand.' For the task in hand so modest a force must have seemed pitifully inadequate. But in the interim two factors had greatly emboldened him.

One was the acquisition and potential of firearms. In the new

gunpowder technology, as in much else, Babur's Lodi adversaries lagged behind the kingdoms and sultanates of the Deccan and the south; there is no evidence to suggest that their forces were acquainted with either cannon or matchlocks. He, on the other hand, had both. Though personally more proficient at archery, he had studied the use of artillery in central Asia, had recruited Turkish gunners, and now took a close interest in the casting of siege-cannon and the transport of field guns. On a previous raid into the Panjab the sharp-shooting potential of matchlocks had also impressed him. For what his forces lacked in numbers they compensated with a capacity, terrifying alike to man, horse and elephant, for deafening and increasingly lethal bombardments.

The other consideration which worked in his favour was the now terminal rivalry amongst his enemies. Sikander Lodi had been succeeded by two sons who, on the insistence of the Lodis' fractious power-brokers, had divided the sultanate between them. Ibrahim, inheriting Delhi, had since overcome his brother in Jaunpur but had thereby alienated the most senior nobility and alarmed Indian rivals like the rajput chief, Rana Sangha of Mewar. The latter now encouraged Babur with offers of collaboration against the Lodis, while in 1523 it had been the Lodis' own governor in the Panjab who had invited Babur to capture Lahore and challenge for the sultanate. This man, Daulat Khan, had since changed his mind and now threatened to oppose the invasion, although other Lodis, including his own son, continued to back Babur.

In the event the twelve thousand Mughals advanced across the Panjab's rivers unopposed. Near the city of Lahore Daulat Khan, old though he was, donned a couple of swords and bragged about

At Panipat, Babur and his Turks defeat the Afghan rulers of Delhi and conquer much of the north. Many of his soldiers wish to return to Central Asia after they plunder.

I put my foot in the stirrup of resolution, set my hand on the rein of trust in God, and moved forward against Sultan Ibrahim ... in the possession of whose throne at that time were Delhi, the capital, and the dominions of Hindustan, whose standing army was rated at a *lakh* (100,000) and whose elephants and whose begs' [nobles'] elephants were about 1000.⁶

The same figures are given for the host with which Ibrahim now moved out from Delhi to oppose him. Although Babur says that his own forces had, if anything, shrunk during their progress across the Panjab, they had also been supplemented by Lodi deserters. When in April 1526 the two armies met at Panipat, eighty kilometres due north of Delhi, Ibrahim is thought to have still enjoyed a numerical advantage of about ten to one.

Babur was not discouraged. For the Lodi he had nothing but contempt. Ibrahim was a novice who knew little of battle-craft, 'neither when to stand, nor move, nor fight'. After a week-long stand-off he had to be prodded into action by Mughal raiders; he then moved forward without guile or stratagem. Babur awaited him in a carefully chosen formation with the close-packed walls of Panipat on one flank and an ambush of brush on the other. Seven

hundred carts, commandeered in the neighbourhood, were lashed together across his front with matchlock-men sheltering between them and gaps every hundred metres for the cavalry to charge from. Additional flying columns were held in reserve. As soon as battle was joined they swung round the enemy's flanks and pressed hard from the rear. Ibrahim had no room to manoeuvre. Despite repeated charges, he failed to break through the cordon of carts. His forces became ever more compacted, the wings falling back on the centre, unable either to advance or withdraw. That very numerical supremacy which should have overwhelmed the Mughals now overwhelmed the Lodis. 'By God's mercy and kindness this difficult affair was made easy for us,' recalled Babur. 'In one half-day that armed mass was laid upon the earth.' The most conservative estimate put the slain at fifteen thousand; amongst them was Ibrahim himself.

Hot in pursuit of survivors, Babur headed for Delhi while Humayun, his son, was 'to ride light and fast for Agra', there to secure the Lodi capital and treasury. Amongst those sheltering in Agra Humayun found Ibrahim's mother and also the family of raja Vikramaditya of Gwalior. Gwalior had finally submitted to the Lodis in 1519; Vikramaditya, Man Singh's successor, had thus become a Lodi feudatory and, fighting under Ibrahim at Panipat, had been duly 'sent to hell'. It was supposedly to curry favour with the conqueror that his family now made a 'voluntary offering [to Humayun] of a mass of jewels and valuables amongst which', notes Babur, 'was the famous diamond which Ala-ud-din must have brought'. The weight of this stone he gives as eight *misqals*, perhaps 186 carats, and its value as equivalent to 'two and a half days' food for the

whole world'. If the Ala-ud-din in question was the Khalji sultan, the diamond had presumably been obtained during that 'Aladdin's' Deccan campaigns, since the main diamond fields were in Golconda (Hyderabad). How it came into the possession of the Gwalior rajas is not known; but many experts think that this notice in the *Baburnama* constitutes the first reference to the famous Koh-i-Nur, 'the mountain of light', a gem credited with conferring on its owner either rulership of the world or imminent extinction, depending on how its erratic history is read. It is also sometimes called 'Babur's diamond', although the first Mughal never actually claimed it. Humayun did offer it to him but, perhaps wisely, Babur declined: 'I just gave it back to him.'⁷

For far from being any kind of world-ruler, Babur, although now possessed of the Panjab, Delhi and Agra, was in a critical situation. It was one thing to defeat the unloved Ibrahim, quite another to secure the submission of the unruly Afghan nobles who had poured into India at the invitation of the Lodi sultans and amongst whom the Lodi territories were now parcelled out. The populace of even Agra was openly hostile and, 'Delhi and Agra excepted, not a fortified town ... was in obedience.' The entire Doab was in enemy hands; so were Aligarh, Bayana and Dholpur, all within easy striking distance of Agra.

Babur's situation was further worsened by growing dissatisfaction within the ranks of his own forces. India had few charms for a God-fearing Mughal *beg*. In a long inventory wherein he reveals as much enthusiasm for India's birds as for its revenues, Babur candidly lists the country's defects: 'no good horses, no good dogs, no grapes, musk-melons or first-rate fruits, no ice or cold water, no

good bread or cooked food in the bazaars, no hot-baths, no colleges, no candles, no torches, and no candlesticks.' Perhaps his men could have managed without candlesticks, but amongst what Babur dubbed an unattractive, unsociable, uncouth and exceedingly numerous race of infidels they could never live at ease. In short, like Alexander's Macedonians, Babur's Mughals had had enough. It was May, one of the hottest and dustiest months of the north Indian year. Honours had been won, booty had been secured and vast amounts of treasure distributed. A more successful raid could scarcely have been hoped for. Now all they wanted was to return to their homes and families, to drink the cooler air of Kabul and in due course resume the struggle for Samarkand.

Babur, like Alexander, remonstrated with them. Sovereignty, he said, depended on the possession of resources, revenues and retainers. After long years of struggle and at appalling risk they had at last obtained such things: broad lands, infinite wealth and innumerable subjects were awaiting their command; who would seriously abandon such plenty for 'the harsh poverty of Kabul'? A close friend, who was also one of his most senior commanders, would do just that. Babur let him go, and took less exception to his departure than to the parting couplet he had daubed on his house: 'If safe and sound I cross the Sind,/Blacken my face ere I wish for Hind.' Most, however, stayed. Babur says they were swayed by his just and reasonable words. More probably they were shamed by his resolution. A few weeks later the monsoon brought relief from the heat. Then, in the campaigning season that followed, Humayun led a force east to Awadh and Jaunpur, scattering the Lodis' recalcitrant feudatories and at last securing those broad lands and that

The Hindu rajputs had seized territory from the Delhi Sultanate as Babur overran it. Babur suffered setbacks, and declared a jihad. He won the battle of Khanua against the rajputs, securing the rest of northern India for the Mughal Empire.

landed fiefs.

There remained, though, one more obstacle to Mughal supremacy in the north. Listing the native powers of India in order of territory and forces, Babur placed first 'the Raja of Bijanagar'. This was Krishna-deva-raya, the greatest of the Vijayanagar kings; since his kingdom was more than a thousand kilometres from Agra he posed no threat. But the second, wrote Babur, 'is Rana Sangha [of Mewar] who in these days has grown great by his own valour and sword'. Though contemptuous of the rajput's idolatry, Babur seems to have had a sneaking regard for Rana Sangha. It was not because Rana Sangha had originally encouraged him to invade. No treaty had ever been signed, and it was obvious that the rajput had simply hoped for a Lodi defeat and then a Mughal withdrawal which would leave the coast clear for his own ambitions. As it was, Rana Sangha had taken the opportunity to strengthen his hold over Rajasthan, and now, in early 1527, he swiftly advanced at the head of a largely rajput army to see off the invader who had so obligingly disposed of the Lodis.

By February the rajputs were at Bayana, seventy kilometres south-west of Agra and lately occupied by the Mughals. Babur moved out to give battle amidst news that his Bayana garrison had been heavily defeated and a reconnaissance party, a thousand strong, routed by 'the fierceness and valour of the pagan army'. It was an ominous beginning and brought gloom amongst the Mughal ranks. A soothsayer predicted disaster; subsidiary forts defected, Indian recruits deserted; 'every day bad news came from

every side.' Once again Babur dug deep to rally his men, this time by appealing to their Islamic convictions. Since the rajputs were infidels, the war was designated a *jihad*. Cowardice thus became apostasy while death assumed the welcome guise of martyrdom. Better still, an acquisitive venture of doubtful legitimacy became the noblest possible of causes while any ambiguity in the minds of former Lodi retainers who were now under his command was dispelled. 'The plan was perfect,' confides Babur, 'it worked admirably ...' All took an oath on the Quran to fight till they fell. Babur himself made what for him was the ultimate sacrifice by ostentatiously abjuring alcohol. Decanters and goblets were dashed to pieces, wine-skins emptied, and a quantity of the latest vintage from Ghazni salted for vinegar. At one, now, with both his men and his troublesome conscience, the born-again Babur prepared for battle.

Unfortunately the details of the great encounter at Khanua (just west of the later Fatehpur Sikri) are not altogether clear. For the forces available to Rana Sangha and his confederates a figure of 200,000 was calculated, but he probably never commanded half that number in battle. Babur, on the other hand, had far more troops than at Panipat; he had just received reinforcements from Kabul, and had now been joined by numerous ex-Lodi retainers including Ibrahim's son. Presumably there was nothing like the disparity of Panipat and, since the battle raged for a whole day, it seems to have been more evenly and much more fiercely contested. Babur again relied on a semi-fortified arrangement of ditches and fascines flanking the same chain of carts which were again interspersed with artillery and matchlock-men; and again he deployed his cavalry so that they early encircled the enemy. But the rajputs

fought with the courage, if also with the lack of co-ordination, that was their wont. In the end, according to their annals as seen by Colonel Tod, defeat resulted not from tactical naivety but from treachery. 'The Tomar traitor who led the [rajput] van went over to Babur, and [Rana] Sangha was obliged to retreat.'⁸ But if such a defection did indeed take place, it clearly came when the issue was already decided.

Khanua left the Mughals supreme in the heartland of northern India. Here mopping-up operations became something of a formality as Babur looked further afield. After the 1527 monsoon another expedition was sent east to Jaunpur. Meanwhile Babur himself struck south into Malwa territory and took the fortified town of Chanderi, whose rajput garrison re-enacted the suicidal ritual of *jauhar*. He planned to continue south, but rapidly changed his mind when news arrived that the eastern expedition had been defeated by Lodi sympathisers and other assorted Afghans.

Campaigns against these and other dissidents in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar kept him busy in 1528-9. It is clear from his memoir, however, that such challenges were not unwelcome; indeed the beligerence was often Babur's. 'The army must move ... in whatever

A brief Afghan restoration in northern India after Babur's death, with a greatly improved administration that the Mughals would adopt.

Jaunpur or anywhere else in Awadh. For while Humayun had been conquering Gujarat, Sher Khan had been about the same business in Bihar and now Bengal. And unlike Humayun, he was taking great care to secure his newly-acquired conquests. Instead of another Afghan upstart, Humayun suddenly found himself faced by a well-prepared contender for sovereignty. The tussle between Mughal and Afghan was far from over.

In 1539, after much to-ing and fro-ing in Bengal, the rival armies finally met at Chausa between Varanasi and Patna. Humayun fell for an Afghan ruse and was defeated. He barely escaped with his life, his troops were decimated, and the myth of Mughal invincibility was badly dented.

A year later it was utterly exploded. Near Kanauj, the imperial city on the upper Ganga from which the Gurjara-Pratiharas had once obscurely reigned, the fate of the short-lived Mughal empire looked to have been decided. In a surprising reversal of Panipat, Humayun's army, forty thousand strong and well supplied with firepower, was overwhelmed by Sher Khan's fifteen thousand mainly Afghan cavalry. Humayun again escaped with his life – and with his monstrous diamond. But failing to win help or even sanctuary from his ungrateful brothers, he became a fugitive in the deserts of Sind and Rajasthan and then an exile at the court of Shah Tamasp, the Safavid ruler of Iran. Luckily Shah Tamasp liked diamonds. Humayun's fortunes would yet revive. Meanwhile Sher Khan Sur was supreme.

The Afghan Surs, dynastically sandwiched amongst the great and magnificently documented Mughals, easily elude the credit that is their due. Their fifteen-year supremacy is sometimes por-

trayed as a reactionary interlude or an impertinent interruption to the glorious Mughal succession. Yet the interlude was rich in inspiration. Sher Khan, who following victory at Chausa had assumed the royal title of Sher Shah, was as able as any Mughal. If, fortuitously, the adventures of Babur the Mughal have a fictitious ring, no such complaint is heard of the stern and often devious doings of Sher Shah Sur. Where Babur's genius lay in the glamour of battlecraft, Sher Shah's lay in the minutiae of statecraft. To the sombre text of his short reign the empire which would soon embrace all India owes just as much as to the animated excitement of Babur's more colourful adventures.

Although embroidered by Afghan admirers, it is clear that Sher Shah's rise from an insignificant Lodi retainer with a couple of small fiefs near Varanasi was in itself remarkable. It took some time, and when he finally gained the throne he was already into his fifties. But to have overcome the rivalries of his fractious Afghan compeers was more than most Lodis had managed, while the conquest of Bengal, and his subsequent settlement of it, reduced that troublesome and previously independent kingdom to a subordinate status unknown since the Tughluq interventions of the fourteenth century.

Further Sur campaigns in the Panjab, Sind and Malwa followed the defeat of Humayun and duly secured those provinces. An expedition into the Deccan like that of Ala-ud-din Khalji, the sultan whom Sher Shah most admired, was also proposed. But, a devout if not fanatical Muslim, Sher Shah argued that the eradication of infidel authority within his existing domains was a higher priority. On the pretext that Muslim mothers and maidens were being

abused in rajput households, he preferred first to reduce bastions of Hindu resistance like Jodhpur, Chitor and, fatefully, Kalinjar. There, too, he triumphed where so many others had failed, but at the cost of his life. A rocket aimed at the fort rebounded off its walls and, exploding, ignited the pile of rockets which were intended to follow it. Sher Shah, who was directing operations, was horribly burnt. He died a few hours later, just as news of the fort's surrender arrived.

In so short a reign (1540–5) a complete overhaul of the machinery of government had scarcely been possible. Yet 'during that brief period his energetic administration forecast many of the centralising measures in revenue assessment and military organisation that would be carried to completion by the Mughals'.¹² These were particularly evident in his settlement of Bengal. Instead of appointing another all-powerful governor, who would assuredly cast off his allegiance at the first opportunity, he divided the province into districts, each directly responsible to himself, and then divided the exercise of authority amongst civil, military and religious officials who were themselves subject to rotation. There and elsewhere efforts were also made to rationalise the assessment and collection of revenue and to afford the cultivator a modicum of security; village headmen were made responsible for any unpunished crimes; corrupt officials were dismissed.

Corruption within the military was also tackled. The practice was revived of branding all cavalry horses so that on active service they could not be replaced by lesser mounts; and for similar reasons attempts were made to compile service rolls which identified and described each trooper. Military posts were established throughout the provinces; roads and caravanserais were built; illegal imposts

and duties were removed to facilitate trade. Memorably Sher Shah also occupies an important place in the history of Indian coinage, in that he coined the first silver rupees which, together with his other coins of gold and copper, would form the basis of the Mughal currency.¹³

Something similar might be said of his architectural creations. Babur's only noteworthy additions to India's monuments had been three mosques of little stylistic distinction. One, at Panipat, celebrated his victory over the Lodi, although another, that at Ayodhya, has since upstaged it. Historians have of late been sorely taxed over this Ayodhya *Babur-i* (or *Babri*) *masjid*. Did it replace a Hindu temple which marked the spot where Lord Rama (of the *Ramayana*) was born? And what, if any, was Babur's role in its construction? Ever since Hindu fanatics laid into the mosque with pickaxes in 1992, thus provoking a more serious cave-in of modern India's secular credentials, more words have been written about this unimpressive site than about any other in India. Adding to them would be only to invite contradiction.

Happily, the much more stylish monuments of Sher Shah have fared better. In Delhi he added to the complex begun by Humayun on the supposed site of Indraprastha, the capital of the Pandavas in the *Mahabharata* and now known as Purana Qila. He also built there a mosque. Only parts of this Qila-i-Kuhna survive, but 'no sanctum and façade in India possesses quite such measured dignity allied to perfect taste in the rich but restrained decoration.' Making comparison with Brunelleschi, the master-builder of fifteenth-century Florence, J.C. Harle in the *Pelican History of Art* series finds here 'a strength, beauty and richness beyond anything achieved by the

Young Akbar's troops fought the 2nd Battle of Panipat and reclaimed Delhi from a Hindu led Afghan army.

through it.

Once again Mughal rule was in jeopardy. Akbar was still only thirteen. He was not in Delhi but in the Panjab. And a formidable if unlikely adversary was mobilising to frustrate not only the Mughal succession but the whole Mughal presence.

Sometimes styling himself 'Raja Vikramaditya' in imitation of various Indian heroes, this new adversary was one Hemu, a Hindu of lowly parentage who had surmounted both the strictures of caste and the disadvantages of a wretchedly puny physique to rise from being a saltpetre pedlar in a provincial bazaar to chief minister to one of the principal Sur claimants. Yet more surprisingly for one who could not even ride a horse, he had acquired a reputation for inspired generalship. Twenty-two consecutive battles is Hemu said to

have won against assorted adversaries. To this tally he now added a twenty-third when, soon after Humayun's death, he stormed Delhi and put its Mughal garrison to flight. Not surprisingly even his mainly Afghan, and so Muslim, troops regarded their 'Shah Hemu' as an inspirational commander and confidently sallied north to engage the main Mughal force in the Panjab.

Outnumbered and out-generated, the Mughal commanders favoured a speedy retreat to Kabul. However Bayram Khan, the young emperor's guardian and virtual regent, stood firm – a decision which the chance capture of Hemu's artillery by a Mughal flying column seemed to support. Hemu's elephants were another matter. According to Abu'l-Fazl, the enemy had assembled a corps of fifteen hundred of the largest and most athletic beasts ever seen. 'How can the attributes of those rushing mountains be strung on the slender thread of words?' he asks. Swifter than the fleetest race-horses, they ran so fast 'that it could not be called running', while, 'mountain-like and dragon-mouthed ... they ruined lofty buildings by shaking them and sportively uprooted strong trees'.²³ In fanciful descriptions of pachyderms, as in panegyric invention, Abu'l-Fazl's Persian could challenge even the Sanskrit of ancient India's dynastic scribes.

At Panipat, the site of Babur's great victory, the two armies met on 5 November 1556. For once victory looked to be going the way of the elephants. 'The horses would not face the elephants,' which 'shook the left and right divisions' and 'dislodged many soldiers of the sublime army'. Hemu, to whose abilities even Abu'l-Fazl bears grudging testimony, commanded operations from a gigantic beast called 'Hawai' ('Windy', or possibly 'Rocket'). 'He made powerful

onsets and performed many valorous acts.' Indeed the Mughals were wavering when 'suddenly an arrow from the bended bow of divine wrath reached Hemu's eye and, piercing the socket, came out at the back of his head.'²⁴ Seeing Hemu collapse into his howdah, his troops lost heart. It was now the sublime army, swords flashing and epithets flying, which closed for the kill. Hawai was captured; Hemu, extracted from his howdah and dragged before the young victor, was quickly beheaded. Next day a Mughal army entered Delhi in triumph yet again. Including Timur's assault, it was third time lucky. Not for another two hundred years would Delhi slip from Mughal rule.

Intermarriage, political representation, and status acknowledgement sealed the loyalty of Hindu noblemen to the Mughals. Turks, Persians, and Afghans were still vastly over represented in the elite.

Sometimes Akbar slipped from the royal apartments to mingle unrecognised with bazaar folk and villagers. For one to whom the written word had to be read by others these contacts were a means to information and a method of verification. They were also the beginning of a lifelong enquiry into matters spiritual and religious. More obviously they made him uniquely aware of the diversity of his subjects and of the great gulf that separated them from their mainly foreign rulers. Unlike Babur or Humayun, Akbar had been born in India, in fact in an Indian village and under Hindu protection. (The place, now just in Pakistan, was Umarkot, a rajput fort in the great desert of Thar where in 1542 Humayun and his entourage had found temporary shelter during their flight from Sher Shah.) To Akbar Indians were not the uncultured mass of infidels who so horrified Babur; they were his countrymen. And whatever their religion, it was his duty not to oppress them. Discriminatory measures against Hindus, like a tax on pilgrims and the detested *jizya*, were lifted. He would even make a point of celebrating the Hindu festivals of Diwali and Dussehra.

It was also at this time, 1562, that Akbar married the daughter of the Kacchwaha rajput raja of Amber (near Jaipur, which city later Kacchwahas would build, thus becoming the maharajas of Jaipur). The marriage was partly a reward for the family's loyalty to Humayun and partly a way of securing that loyalty to Akbar and his heirs. Additionally the raja, his son and his grandson were all inducted into the Mughal hierarchy as *amirs* (nobles), who in return for the retention of their ancestral lands, their Hindu beliefs and clan standing, would swear allegiance to the emperor and provide specified numbers of cavalry for service in the imperial forces. Both

Bhagwant Das, the raja's son, and Man Singh, his grandson, eventually became amongst the most trusted of Akbar's lieutenants. In fact this formula, with or without a royal marriage, worked so well that it was steadily extended to numerous other rajput chiefs.

Rajasthan, so long a thicket of opposition combining the prickliest resistance with the least fruitful rewards, was thus incorporated piecemeal within the imperial system which itself became much more broad-based. In 1555 the Mughal nobility, or *omrah*, had numbered fifty-one, nearly all of them non-Indian Muslims (Turks, Afghans, Uzbeks, Persians). By 1580 the number had increased to 222, of whom nearly half were Indian, including forty-three rajputs. All benefited from this arrangement: the Mughals secured the services of a respected elite plus their warlike followers, while the rajputs gained access to high rank and wealth within a pan-Indian empire.

Not all rajput chiefs saw it that way. Some required the rougher persuasion of conquest while Udai Singh, the Sesodia Rana of

Religious pluralism and syncretism (from which Sikhs also originated) in Akbar's reign, along with his heterodox views, led to dissent in the Islamic community.

In an architectural setting of such blatant eclecticism Akbar's curiosity about his subjects and their beliefs also became markedly eclectic. From patronising a few Hindu practices he launched into a thorough investigation of the whole gamut of existing religions. At Fatehpur Sikri he installed a veritable bazaar of disputing divines and presided over their heated debates with something of the relish he usually reserved for elephant fights. To the Quranic arguments of Sunni, Shia and Ismaili were added the more mystical and populist appeals of numerous Sufi orders, the *bhakti* fervour of

Saiva and Vaishnava devotees, the fastidious logic of naked Jains, and the varied insights of numerous wandering ascetics, saints and other 'insouciant recluses'.

Also welcome were representatives of several assertive new creeds. These included disciples of Kabir, the late-fifteenth-century poet and reformer, and probably those of Guru Nanak, the early-sixteenth-century founder of the Sikh faith. Kabir had spent most of his life in the vicinity of Varanasi, where he redirected the popular fervour of *bhakti* and *Sufi* devotionism towards a supreme transcendental godhead which subsumed both Allah of Islam and brahman of Hinduism. Similar ideas of Hindu – Muslim accommodation and syncretism were explored by Guru Nanak as he travelled widely in India before eventually returning to his native Panjab, where he had once served as an accountant in the household of Daulat Khan Lodi, the two-sworded 'blockhead' who had opposed Babur's progress in 1526.

Like Kabir, Guru Nanak insisted on the unity of the godhead and on the equality of all believers regardless of community or caste. *Ulema* and brahmans alike were seen as conspiring to divide and appropriate an indivisible, infinite and unknowable God just as they divided His followers into Muslims and Hindus, Shia and Sunni, Vaishnava and Shaiva. By concentrating on this transcendent deity, on his Name and on his Word as revealed to the Guru, and by a neo-Buddhist attention to righteous conduct and truth, men might achieve the divine grace to overcome *karma* and attain salvation. Many from the trading and cultivating classes of the Panjab were drawn to this creed and formed a brotherhood (*panth*) under the nine Gurus who succeeded Nanak. To the third of these, Guru Amar

Das, Akbar is said to have given the land at Amritsar on which the Sikh's Golden Temple would eventually be built. But as yet the *panth* remained a purely religious and social movement with no political or military dimension.

Definitely included in Akbar's theological *tourneés* were Portuguese priests, of whose presence the emperor had become aware during the conquest of Gujarat. Interpreting the imperial summons as evidence of divine intervention, in 1580 the padres hastened from Goa confident of the most sensational conversion of all time. In the event they were disappointed – as were all the other disputants. Akbar's quest for spiritual enlightenment was undoubtedly sincere but it was not disinterested. He sought a faith which would satisfy the needs of his realm as well as those of his conscience, one based on irrefutable logic, composed (like Fatehpur Sikri) of the finest elements in existing practice, and endowed with a universal appeal, something monumental and sublime which would transcend all sectarian differences and unite his chronically disparate subjects. It was a tall order and one which even a bazaar-ful of theologians could not fulfil.

In its stead, and perhaps with something of the naivety and self-reliance of the unlettered genius, Akbar improvised an ideology based on the only element in which he had complete confidence, his imperial persona. The resultant *Din Ilahi* ('Divine Faith') was neither clearly formulated nor vigorously promulgated. It centred on himself, but whether as God or His representative is not certain; and it graded his disciples, all of whom were senior and uncritical courtiers, according to the degree to which they could supposedly perceive his divine distinction. By Abu'l-Fazl, who became the main

exponent of the new creed, this distinction was represented as a mystical effulgence which beamed from the royal forehead as from a mirror. The *Akbar-nama* devotes whole chapters to the historical pedigree of the phenomenon.

The same work begins with what looks like the standard Muslim invocation *Allahu Akbar!* ('God is Great!'). But given the coincidence of the emperor's name, it could also be read as the blasphemous 'Akbar is God.' The emperor claimed, even when the same phrase began appearing on his coinage, that no unorthodox meaning was intended. But given that he was assuming other religious prerogatives, including what some regarded as a doctrinal authority amounting to infallibility, and given the announcement of a new chronology to be known as the 'Divine Era' and to begin from his own accession, his disclaimer must be suspect.

It certainly seemed so to his critics. To the orthodox, to the *ulema* of whom Akbar was especially dismissive, indeed to all but royal sycophants, it looked as if Islam was under threat. Thus in 1579–80 there materialised the most serious challenge of the entire reign. Senior Islamic officials openly condemned the new directives and so provided a focus for the rebellion of mainly Afghan units in Bengal and Bihar plus a rising by Hakim, Akbar's half-brother who held the governorship of Kabul. The latter had dynastic ambitions, the former nursed military grievances; it was not a purely religious protest. But with the promulgation in Jaunpur of a *fatwa* enjoining all Muslims to rebel, and with the naming of Hakim as the legitimate sovereign during the Friday congregational prayers, the emperor's authority looked to be undermined.

Luckily Akbar's personal ascendancy was by now unquestioned;

Mughals paid their administrators and noblemen with revenue grants. The soldiers were very harsh in collecting the revenue that financed them directly. The revenue grants were temporary, and this gave their recipients little reason to develop their areas.

of architects, civil engineers, stonemasons and polishers needed for India's most ambitious building programme. Similar establishments catered for the nobility in the provincial capitals which, like Ahmadabad, rapidly grew into major cities under Islamic patronage. In the field a moveable bazaar of farriers, armourers, elephant-keepers, tent-makers and provisioners accompanied the imperial forces.

The advent of new European trading companies also stimulated industrial demand, especially for the cotton textiles – muslins, taffetas, brocades, batiks, gingham – of Gujarat, Bengal, Golconda and the Tamil country. Founded respectively in 1600 and 1602, the East India Companies of London and the Netherlands had been intended to contest the Portuguese monopoly of the mainly Indonesian spice trade. They soon became equally interested in India's manufactures. During the reign of Jahangir, Akbar's immediate successor, both companies set up trading houses in Surat, which was by now the main port in Gujarat. They also began to tap into the ancient trade between India's east coast ports and south-east Asia. Politically the companies were an irrelevance and would long remain so. But by 1640 they had ended Portugal's monopoly of the eastern sea-routes; Europe's domestic markets were discovering the joys of cheaper soft-furnishings and more washable cotton apparel; and sailings, whether regulated by the companies or unregulated, were boosting demand in India and, since payment was usually made in bullion, providing a welcome influx of silver.

None of this alleviated the plight of the cultivator. In fact his situation may have been worsened by the prevailing *pax Mughala*. Unlike the nayaks of the Vijayanagar empire, office-holders and

jagirdars under the Mughal dispensation were seldom left long enough in possession of their grants either to become acquainted with rural conditions or to attract local allegiance. Defiance of imperial directives was therefore rarer and, with the important exception of imperial claimants, the nobility were less inclined to revolt. The reforms undertaken by Akbar would indeed go a long way towards integrating most of the subcontinent into a strong, centralised political structure. But it was an integration from above which ignored the plight of the producer and sought increased productivity through increased exploitation. 'The Mughal state was an insatiable Leviathan,' writes Tapan Raychaudhuri in *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, 'its impact on the economy was defined above all by its unlimited appetite for resources.'⁵

Akbar's reforms focused on two distinct control mechanisms: the creation of a centralised bureaucracy, and the elaboration of a standard system of military grading. Each resulted in a separate hierarchy which overlapped only at the top. The bureaucracy sprang from his abolition of the office of chief minister. Instead there were to be four departments and four department heads, one for finance and revenue, one for the military and intelligence, one for religious affairs and the judiciary, and one for the royal household and public works. The same arrangement was duplicated in the provincial capitals of each of the main provinces (Lahore for the Panjab, Ajmer for Rajasthan, etc.), and was extended to other regions as they were incorporated into the empire. All departments were subject to audit; and most staff were salaried although the more senior office-holders were awarded *jagirs* (revenue assignments) and a ranking within the military hierarchy.

thousand *mansabdars* at the time and between them they commanded 150,000–200,000 cavalymen. The emperor personally commanded a further seven thousand crack *sowars* plus eighty thousand infantry and gunners who together accounted for another 9 percent of the budget. In addition, according to Abu'l-Fazl, the locally-based *zamindars* could muster a colossal 4.5 million retainers, mostly infantrymen. These last, who were poorly paid if at all by their *zamindars*, did not feature in the imperial budget. But by aggregating all these troop numbers and then adding to them the likely horde of non-combatant military dependants – suppliers, servants, family members – it has been suggested that the figure for those who relied on the military for a living could have been as high as twenty-six million. That would be a quarter of the entire population. The Mughal empire, whether bearing the character of 'a patrimonial bureaucracy' as per the administrative hierarchy, or of 'a centralised autocracy' as per the ranking system, was essentially a coercive military machine.

Much of this coercive potential was deployed in campaigns against obdurate neighbours like the Deccan sultanates. But, excluding those units on active service or in attendance at the royal court, many *sowar* contingents were stationed in different parts of the empire where they could be called upon to maintain order and enforce the collection of revenue. In effect many regular troops, as well as all those *zamindari* retainers, were being used to extract the agricultural surplus which financed them. It was, as Raychaudhuri puts it, 'a vicious circle of coercion helping to maintain a machinery of coercion'.⁷

Such heavy-handed intervention on the part of the central gov-

The system of military ranking, Akbar's other control mechanism, assigned to every senior military commander and office-holder a numerical rank which governed his status and remuneration. Additionally a second system was introduced to denote the number of armed cavalymen, or *sowars*, which each had to maintain for service in the imperial army; extra horses, transport and elephants were stipulated for the most senior ranks. Thus all *amirs* (nobles) and many lesser *mansabdars* (rank-holders) had both a *zat* (personal) ranking and a *sowar* (trooper) ranking. All such rankings were in the emperor's gift, as were promotion, demotion and dismissal. The system was laden with incentives and duly produced some exceptionally able commanders and administrators. It also encouraged personal loyalty to the emperor while integrating into a single power-structure the assorted Turks, Persians, Afghans, rajputs and Indian Muslims who comprised the nobility.

Although the emperor maintained his own household troops, the recruitment and maintenance of most of his vast forces were thus in effect contracted out. Similarly, since all senior *mansabdars* were awarded *jagirs* by way of salaries, the responsibility for most revenue collection was also contracted out. Rates of remuneration, which included both the *mansabdar's* salary and so much per *sowar*, were matched by *jagirs* affording a similar aggregate yield. If their specified yield came to more, the surplus was due to the imperial treasury; if the *jagirdar* extracted more than the specified yield, he kept it.

'Towards the end of [Akbar's] reign *mansabdars* and their followers consumed 82 percent of the total annual budget of the empire for their pay allowances.'⁶ There were around two

33 mins left in book

Mughal successions were fratricidal affairs.

will grow up a wolf, even though reared with man himself.' This proved unintentionally apposite. In 1622 Prince Khurram, Jahangir's second and best-loved son, on whom he had just bestowed the title 'Shah Jahan' ('King of the World'), would dispose of his elder brother (the blind Khusrau) and then himself rebel against his father. The whelp was indeed worthy of the wolf. In the field or on the run, Shah Jahan led the imperial forces a merry dance for four years. Father and son were only reconciled eighteen months before Jahangir's death in 1627. There then followed more blood-letting as Shah Jahan made good his claim to the throne by ordering the death of his one remaining brother, plus sundry cousins.

And so it went on. 'Deeming no man their relation', least of all their father, in due course each of Shah Jahan's four sons would mobilise separately against him as also against one another. When Aurangzeb won this contest and in 1658 deposed his father Shah Jahan and imprisoned him in Agra's fort for the rest of his days, he not unreasonably justified his conduct on the grounds that he was merely treating Shah Jahan as Shah Jahan had sought to treat Jahangir and as Jahangir had sought to treat Akbar. Unsurprisingly Aurangzeb would himself in turn be challenged by his progeny.

Such was the intensity of this internal strife that during much of the seventeenth century it obscured and even confounded attempts to expand Mughal rule. Jahangir's one notable success was achieved early in his reign when Prince Khurram (Shah Jahan), at that time still 'my dearest son' rather than 'the wretch' he later became, secured the submission of the Mewar rajputs. Since Rana Udai Singh's desertion of Chitor and its capture by Akbar, the Mewar Sesodias had recouped their forces and under Rana Amar Singh had success-

Shivaji and his Marathas forged a vast but ill defined Hindu kingdom in the late 17th century. Even after Shivaji's death, the Marathas proved formidable opponents to the Mughals.

of trade, but there was a tendency here for the weavers to gravitate towards the European settlements which thus became zones of export-dependent prosperity. None of these settlements was yet of much political importance but the security offered by their heavy guns and well-built forts was proving an attraction. Additionally their stocks of powder, guns and gunners were eagerly sought by the contending powers in the hinterland.

The one obvious change which had overcome the Deccan during Aurangzeb's twenty-four-year absence was, however, momentous: whereas in the first half of the seventeenth century there had been two major powers in the peninsula, the Golconda sultanate and the Bijapur sultanate, there were now three. The Marathas had come of age. Having established their military credentials in the service of others and then, under Shivaji's inspirational leadership, having created an independent homeland in the Western Ghats, they had since elevated the homeland into a state and Shivaji into its king.

This revival of Hindu kingship at a time of awesome and markedly orthodox Muslim supremacy had been both unexpected and highly dramatic. As well as causing a sensation at the time, Shivaji's extraordinary exploits transcend their immediate context to dazzle his successors, console Hindu pride during the looming years of British supremacy, and provide Indian nationalists with an inspiring example of indigenous revolt against alien rule. Latterly they have also served to encourage Hindu extremists in the belief that martial prowess is as much part of their tradition as non-violence.

Of Shivaji's exploits the most celebrated had occurred in 1659. In the words of Khafi Khan, an unofficial chronicler of Aurangzeb's

and, of course, lavish donations to brahmins. Additionally a new era was proclaimed and a new calendar drawn up. There was no horse-sacrifice but, to complete the traditional ceremony, Shivaji set off on a token *digvijaya* which included a raid on a Mughal encampment and more forays in Kandesh and Berar.

Now an independent sovereign and temporarily under no great threat from the Mughal forces, Shivaji turned south and, in alliance with the Golconda sultanate, made a joint attack on the distant Bijapur possessions in the south of Tamil Nadu. The campaign, his last, was conducted almost entirely by Maratha forces and resulted in the formation of a new Maratha military nucleus based on the captured forts of Vellore and Jinji (south-west of Madras). When in 1680 Shivaji died, dysentery having subverted 'dignity', he thus left a Maratha kingdom of great but ill-defined extent. Its territories were not contiguous and its subjects were still unaccustomed to other than personal allegiance to their remarkable leader.

Divisions amongst the Maratha leaders were further exacerbated by a disputed succession. But in 1681 Shambhaji, one of Shivaji's two competing sons, gained the upper hand, had himself crowned, and resumed his father's expansionist policies. It was to Shambhaji's court that Prince Akbar, Aurangzeb's rebellious son, had made his way after the failure of his rajput intrigues. And it was to nullify any possible rajput – Maratha alliance around the person of the prince, as well as to resume his long affair with the Deccan sultanates, that in 1682 the emperor himself headed south with the entire imperial court, the imperial administration, and something like 180,000 troops.

The conjunction of Maratha and rajput resistance which Prince Akbar had hoped to engineer against his father never materialised. Shambhaji, with Mughal armies already swarming through the northern Maratha lands, preferred to ignore the prince's pleas for an

an inland offensive and concentrated instead on his coastal neighbours, including a fierce little war with the Portuguese in Goa. In despair Prince Akbar took ship for Persia in 1687; like Humayun, he hoped to interest the shah in his ambitions but was disappointed.

Meanwhile Aurangzeb's armies were enjoying uninterrupted success although no decisive victories. 'The Mughal strategy toward Maharashtra was not subtle, just thorough.'⁶ Maratha lands were ravaged and Maratha *deshmukhs* overawed and then enlisted in the imperial service as *mansabdars*. But the forts were rarely worth the immense effort of capturing them and the main enemy detachments proved too wily to be induced into battle. Already it was becoming clear that outright conquest of the Maratha kingdom would demand a greater commitment of imperial resources than Aurangzeb had realised.⁷

Badly in need of more tangible success, the emperor turned on Bijapur. In 1684 an army of eighty thousand invaded the sultanate. Not so much defeated as overwhelmed, both the city and its sultan surrendered after a desperate siege lasting over a year. The kingdom became a Mughal province, its chief nobles were co-opted into the Mughal hierarchy, and its sultan became a state prisoner in the imperial encampment. There he was soon joined by his opposite num-

By the end of the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb's reign, harsh Islamic rule had inspired widespread resistance. The Marathas spread their rule and influence across much of India.

He escaped and headed south to the Maratha possessions in Tamil Nadu. There, installed on the heights of Jinji, he was soon under siege from another Mughal army. The siege of Jinji lasted an amazing eight years (1689–97) and accounted for most of Rajaram's reign. At times Maratha units from elsewhere pressed the Mughals so hard, and cut off their supplies so successfully, that the besiegers became the besieged. At others the stalemate stemmed from collusion; when the fort finally fell Rajaram and most of his men were allowed to make their escape.

Aurangzeb himself never visited Jinji. Nor was Rajaram's protracted defence responsible for the emperor's remaining in the Deccan. The real difficulty lay in the intransigence of the Maratha bands in the Western Ghats. Here, well into his eighties, the emperor would continue to lead his weary armies on an expensive and increasingly futile round of fort-bagging. He saw the campaign as a *jihad* and, along with such pious works as transcribing the Quran and stitching skull-caps for the faithful, he regarded a visit to another doomed stronghold of idolatry as an appropriate way in which to end his days.

But such obsessive concentration on the minutiae of Maharashtra resistance was not good for the empire as a whole, and it was hopelessly counter-productive in respect of the Marathas. The terrain was partly responsible. Anywhere less suited to the Mughal military machine than the mountain rockery of the Ghats would be hard to imagine. North-to-south perpendicular escarpments shield a chaotic land of wooded ravines and barren downs in which every hill is a natural fortress and every valley a potential death-trap. Between the Konkan coastline of baked rock and the Deccan hinter-

land of parched tundra, this same choppy configuration continues for hundreds of miles. Here the Mughals' superior artillery and heavily armoured cavalry were more a handicap than an asset.

When forts were taken it was rarely by storm. Their garrisons preferred to accept the best terms on offer, wait till the Mughal circus moved on, and then, renouncing their pledges, resume their lands and reoccupy the forts. Aurangzeb, in fact, was confronted with a new kind of insurgency which was partly of his own making. With Shambhaji dead and Rajaram cornered, each Maratha chief was now operating independently. The state was no longer susceptible to the systematic dismemberment meted out to Shambhaji. Aurangzeb's army was simply betraying its own impotence and, by devastating Maratha lands, positively obliging those whose livelihood derived from them to take up arms and redouble their raiding.

In 1700 Satara, to which place Shivaji had earlier moved the Maratha capital, came under siege and was eventually surrendered to the Mughals. At about the same time Rajaram died. His senior widow, Tarabai, assumed control in the name of her son, Shambhaji II, and offered terms to Aurangzeb which should have ended the war. Yet despite the fact that Satara had cost thousands of lives – two thousand Mughal troops died in a single misdirected mining attempt – the emperor rejected this overture. That same year Maratha raiders for the first time crossed the Narmada river. This was the traditional Rubicon between the Deccan and the north; Malwa was now in the Maratha sights. Two years later they turned east to launch an expedition fifty thousand strong against Hyderabad. The great city, still one of the richest in the peninsula, was ransacked.

In 1704 it was ransacked again and the same fate befell even Machilipatnam (Masulipatnam), its port on the Bay of Bengal. Maratha activities now extended to virtually the entire peninsula.

Meanwhile Tarabai as regent was insinuating into the Mughal province of the Deccan what amounted to a parallel administration. This was a new tactic based on a Maratha claim to a 25 percent share (*chauth*) of all revenues collected in the Deccan and a further 10 per cent for the hereditary Maratha *sardeshmukh*, or sovereign. Payment supposedly guaranteed protection, especially from Mughal revenue collectors; it also justified a shadow hierarchy of Maratha governors and deputies operating from their own fortified bases within Mughal territory and levying additional tolls on the vital trade routes of the region. Non-payment, of course, whether by traders or *zamindars*, meant forcible expropriation or further raids. In practice it was little better than a protection racket. But it was not necessarily resisted. The emperor's extreme old age, the succession crisis which would inevitably follow his death, the resentment stirred up by his religious policies, the strain imposed on his military and financial resources by the incessant Maratha campaign, and the growing discontent amongst Mughal *mansabdars* whose Deccan *jagirs* either failed to materialise or failed to yield their expected revenue, were all taking their toll of Mughal authority.

Unlike many previous Islamic rulers in India, Aurangzeb was a pious Moslem. He banned alcohol & drugs, replaced entertainers with holy men, destroyed Hindu temples, only hired Moslem bureaucrats, and collected jizya from non-Moslems.

Before personally intervening there, he had important reforms to put in hand. The war of succession had interrupted the work of government. Imperial authority needed to be reimposed in many areas, the vital flow of revenue restored, loyal servants rewarded, and reliable supporters enlisted. Many of the latter would be drawn from the ranks of the *ulema*, the religious and juridical establishment. Restoring the Muslim credentials of Mughal rule and so reinstating India in the world community of Islam remained Aurangzeb's priority. This was the God-given cause which had brought him success as a contender for the throne, and this alone could guarantee his further success as its incumbent.

An innovation at his second enthronement had been the ap-

pointment of a *muhtasib*, a 'censor' or guardian of public morality, whose duties included the supervision of bazaars and the suppression of such un-Islamic behaviour as gambling, blasphemy and the consumption of alcohol. Opium as well as liquor was totally forbidden, a prohibition which hit the convivial habits of the court as hard as it did the bazaars. In the same spirit, dancers, musicians and artists were dismissed from imperial employ. Their places were taken by bearded jurists and Quranic divines who laboured to produce a standard compilation of Hanafi jurisprudence. The emperor also discontinued his predecessors' practice of appearing on a palace balcony at sunrise, thus affording the public an apotheosised glimpse of their ruler. In the tenth year of his reign even the official chroniclers were ordered to lay down their simpering pens. Vanity, too, was un-Islamic. From such earnest endeavours to remodel his court in conformity with the precepts of his faith Aurangzeb emerges as a sincere believer untainted by hypocrisy.

Accusations of bigotry, on the other hand, are hard to counter. Although they invariably come from non-Muslim writers, they focus on a whole range of measures, introduced over a period of twenty years, which were indeed blatantly discriminatory. The tax on Hindu pilgrims, lifted by Akbar, was reimposed; revenue endowments enjoyed by temples and brahmins were rescinded; Hindu merchants were penalised by heavier duties; the provincial administrations were instructed to replace Hindu employees with Muslims; and most notoriously of all, newly built, or rebuilt, temples were to be destroyed. Amongst those temples razed and replaced with mosques were such high-profile and heavily patronised shrines as the great Vishvanatha temple in Varanasi – where now

still stands (Hindu zealots permitting) the Great Mosque of Aurangzeb – and the new Keshava Deo temple at Mathura – where now still stands (ditto) another great Aurangzeb mosque. Finally, in 1679, came the heaviest blow of all with the reimposition of the detested *jizya* on non-Muslims.

One man's bigot may, however, be another man's saint. Aurangzeb's apologists argue that Shah Jahan had also discriminated against non-Muslims and targeted temples, that Aurangzeb in fact destroyed comparatively few temples, and that to others he even granted *jagirs*.²³ Moreover the sites which were indeed desecrated were chosen because they posed a direct political or ideological challenge. Hence Varanasi, 'the Athens of India' according to Bernier, was a prime target because it was 'the general school for Hindus'²⁴ as well as a major centre for what Muslims regarded as that most abominable form of idolatry, *lingam* worship. Even the *jizya* was not an unreasonable imposition. Although usually described as a poll tax, it was more like a commutation tax in that it applied only to male adults who, had they been Muslims, would have been liable to military service in a *jihad*; as non-Muslims they were excused this duty but must instead contribute to the protection they supposedly enjoyed by paying the *jizya*. The rate varied with the taxpayer's ability to pay. But the poorest were exempt and it seems unlikely that the tax was collected at all in the remoter regions of the empire.

Those hardest hit were those from whom it was easiest to collect, notably the commercial and artisanal classes in the cities. They were also the most vocal. When the order was first published, Shahjahanabad – Delhi erupted in protest. Hordes of Hindus – 'money-

changers and drapers, all kinds of shopkeepers from the Urdu bazaar, mechanics and workmen of all kinds' – jammed the roadway and barred the emperor's short progress from the Red Fort to the Jama Masjid.

Every moment the crowd increased, and the emperor's equipage was brought to a standstill. At length an order was given to bring out the elephants and direct them against the mob. Many fell trodden to death ... For some days the Hindus continued to assemble in great numbers and complain, but at length they submitted to the *jizya*.²⁵

Other protests are recorded and subsequent opponents of Mughal rule would cite the *jizya* as a major grievance. But the idea that Aurangzeb intentionally set about the persecution and forced conversion of his non-Muslim subjects is absurd. He was too shrewd; they too numerous. More reasonably he wanted to create a moral climate in which Muslims could live in accordance with the tenets of Islam and in which non-Muslims would be aware both of their subordinate status and of how they might improve it by conversion.

Mughal persecution of Sikhs led to Sikh militancy in Punjab.

of the seventeenth century, with revenue receipts increasing by two-thirds and Lahore becoming a major commercial centre. This trend had since been reversed, with both agricultural production and revenue falling despite rising prices. Rural distress added to Banda Bahadur's appeal and turned his protest into 'a millennial resistance movement'¹⁰ with a strong element of lower-caste revolt. Though poorly armed, the Sikh forces began systematically storming the mainly Muslim towns of the region.

Banda himself assumed a royal title, initiated a new calendar and began minting the first Sikh coinage. In thus adding political autonomy to the aspirations of the new brotherhood of the *khalsa*, he anticipated by nearly a century the Sikh kingdom of Ranjit Singh. Although forced to retreat into the hills by Bahadur Shah's massive onslaught, Banda and his many sympathisers outlived the emperor and, when finally defeated in 1715, left a legacy of defiant protest and sectarian militancy. 'Though Banda Bahadur, ... and along with him seven hundred other Sikhs, were captured and slain in 1715, Sikh hostility continued to subvert the foundations of Mughal power till the province was in total disarray in the middle of the eighteenth century.'¹¹

The more pressing Sikh problem arose from the assassination in 1708 of Gobind Singh, the last of the Sikh Gurus. At the time the Guru had been attending the emperor in the hopes of winning back a Sikh base recently established at Anandpur Sahib (near Bilaspur in Himachal Pradesh) and of obtaining redress against the local Mughal commander who had been hounding the Sikhs. This same man, who had also murdered the Guru's two sons, was now widely regarded as having instigated the death of the Guru himself.

By the peace-loving disciples of Guru Nanak such provocation might once have been ignored. But under Guru Gobind the Sikh *panth* (brotherhood) had undergone a radical transformation. Retreating to the Panjab hills after Aurangzeb's execution of Guru Tegh Bahadur in 1676, Guru Gobind had been obliged to arm his followers so that they might hold their own against the hill rajahs. Support arrived from Sikhs scattered throughout north India. The claims of conscience were now to be maintained by force whenever necessary. Even Mughal contingents were successfully repulsed. In keeping with this more assertive stance, Guru Gobind had also introduced a more rigid standard of orthodoxy. True Sikhs must henceforth be inducted through a baptismal ceremony into the *khasa*, 'the pure'; and they must leave their hair uncut, carry arms and adopt the epithet of 'Singh' ('Lion'). Clearly recognisable, more cohesive, more territorially aware, and much more militant, the *panth* was readying itself to join the contest for power in the late Mughal period.

Within a year of the Guru's death a disciple calling himself Banda Bahadur began collecting arms and followers in the eastern Panjab. The Panjab, like other provinces, had prospered during the first half

Much as in Roman times, specie flowed from the West to India. The British didn't mind, as they made fortunes and Europeans took over the shipping industry.

Madras and Calcutta, however, prospered. The Company's Indian 'investment', or purchases, of mainly cotton textiles but also silks, molasses and saltpetre from Bengal and of indigo from Gujarat were proving highly profitable. So, from an Indian point of view, was access to the silver of the Americas, with which the Company paid for its purchases. On arrival the silver was usually minted into rupees, thereby further monetising the Mughal economy which, if anything, grew more buoyant even as Mughal power declined. Indian bankers, entrepreneurs and officials benefited greatly from both the stability of the currency and the availability of capital. On the other hand, as the volume of trade increased, so did dependence on this seemingly unlimited source of treasure. In London too, as once in imperial Rome, there were other Jeremiahs who decried the haemorrhaging of their national reserves which resulted from such

a one-sided trade. But with taffetas, muslins, chintzes and calicos taking over Europe's linen cupboards, crowding its wardrobes and smothering its furniture, the Company brushed aside such criticisms, confident in the support of stockholders whose handsome apparel mirrored their handsome dividends.

Of more immediate concern to the directors of the Company were the activities of its employees in a personal capacity. English fortunes were notoriously made in India not by loyal service in the purchase and despatch of the Company's piece-goods but by private investment in a variety of financial opportunities. Some were concerned with trade. Only over the 'out and back' traffic between England and the East was the Company able to enforce its monopoly. Within the East and within India itself, Company men took advantage of the decline in Indian-operated shipping which had begun during Portugal's sixteenth-century *Estado da India* to invest heavily in the Indian Ocean trade. They owned or leased ships, freighted cargoes, sold insurance, and above all took advantage of the security and protection of their employer's flag. Thus from Madras, as employees of the Company, the American-born

The origins of Mysore as a remnant of an older Hindu kingdom never subjugated by the Mughals. The skilled Moslem warrior Haidar Ali and his son Tipu Sultan seized the kingdom, and fought 4 wars with the British.

was a sign of things to come. From the Mysore region of the southern Deccan two formidable and ferociously anti-British dynasts in the persons of Haidar Ali and his son, Tipu Sultan, were about to pose a direct challenge to British hegemony in the Carnatic. Compared to these new challengers, the over-extended and seldom united Marathas were more an irritation than a threat; they could be 'ring-fenced' and then picked off as occasion offered. But in British eyes Mysore was a serious contender, a peninsular rival with the political and military credentials of genuine statehood. Whether or not Mysore was championed by France, it must be defeated.

The so-called 'kingdom' of Mysore had been one of the several dependent chieftancies and nayak-ships to survive from the ruins of the Vijayanagar empire. Although vulnerable to the expansionist ambitions of the Deccan sultanates in the seventeenth century and of the Marathas in the eighteenth century, its relations with the Mughal empire had been inconspicuous. Exceptionally, therefore, it was not a legatee of Mughal authority. Unlike, say, Hyderabad or Awadh, it did not correspond to a Mughal province; unlike the rajput and Maratha ruling families, its Wodeyar rulers had not been top-ranking *mansabdars*; and unlike the Nawab-Nizam of Hyderabad, the Nawab of Awadh or the Nawab of Bengal, the Mysore Wodeyars and their successors lacked the stature and legitimacy of high imperial office. If precedents be sought for the relationships on which their kingdom was based and for the economic and geographical factors which determined its expansion, they lurk in the

history of earlier Hindu dynasties in southern Karnataka like the Hoysalas of Belur/Halebid or even the Chalukyas of Badami/Aihole.

Yet the Mysore which confronted the British was not a born-again Hindu kingdom like that which was so self-consciously reconstituted by Shivaji in Maharashtra. For in the 1730s the incumbent Wodeyar raja had been relieved of authority by two brothers, and it was in their service that Haidar Ali Khan, a devout Muslim whose ancestors had fought in the armies of the sultans of Bijapur, rose to prominence. In 1749, while participating in the succession struggle which followed the death of Nizam-ul-Mulk of Hyderabad (the first nizam), Haidar Ali had obtained both considerable wealth and the services of some French deserters. The first enabled him to increase his forces and the second helped train them in European techniques. During the Carnatic Wars he learned more about European tactics and acquired both artillery and French gunners. Thus in 1758, when Mysore was attacked by the Marathas, Haidar Ali was the obvious choice for commander of the Mysore forces. He acquitted himself well and, following a brief trial of strength with the incumbent brothers, had by 1761 become the undisputed ruler of Mysore.¹³

Meanwhile in Hyderabad the French-installed nizam had been deposed by his brother, Nizam Ali. The latter proposed an assault on Mysore to which the British in Madras, fearful that recent Mysore conquests in Kerala might be repeated in the Carnatic, readily agreed. Unconsciously treading the ancient trail of countless Pallava and Chola armies, an Anglo-Hyderabad expedition duly toiled up to the Deccan plateau and, with this piece of gratuitous and unashamed aggression, the First Mysore War got underway in

Mysore modernized on European lines, with overseas trading posts, agricultural diversification, industrialization, a professional army, and foreign technical experts.

her nor salute her.¹⁵

Whether Tipu's emissaries had any inkling that all was not well with the Bourbons is unrecorded. But with the storming of the Bastille only a year away and with London watching his every move, Louis XVI was in no position to gratify his visitors with political and military support. In fact France's domestic crisis meant that her ambitions in India were about to be abandoned and all troops withdrawn. However, Tipu's less contentious request for 'seeds of flowers and plants of various kinds, and for technicians, workers and doctors' was entertained. When the mission left for home at the end of the year it was accompanied by a veritable *atelier* of munitions experts, gunsmiths, porcelain-workers, glass-makers, watchmakers, tapestry-makers and linen-weavers, plus 'two printers of oriental languages, one physician, one surgeon, two engineers and two gardeners'.

Haidar Ali had turned Mysore's forces into a professional army, trained, equipped and paid along European lines. Tipu was determined similarly to modernise his state's economy. Where Haidar had been illiterate, Tipu benefited from a good education and an extremely inquisitive mind. Alone amongst his reigning contemporaries, he identified something of the dynamic which lay behind the uniformed efficiency of the European regimes and set about duplicating it. Trade was obviously important. To this end he established a state trading company, encouraged investors to buy shares in it, and organised a network of overseas 'factories' located around the Arabian Sea and in the Persian Gulf. Modelled on those of the European trading companies, they included both a commercial staff and

a military establishment. There is no mention of Louis XVI being petitioned for a 'factory' in France, but Tipu certainly urged the idea on the Ottoman emperor and also approached the ruler of Pegu in Burma.

Command of the Malabar ports gave Mysore a ready outlet to the sea plus control of their outward trade in pepper and timbers and of their inward trade in mainly horses from the Gulf states; it was no coincidence that the most effective cavalry in India belonged to the Marathas and to Mysore, both of whom had ready access to the west coast ports. To increase the variety of Mysore's exports Tipu sought new crops by experimenting with seeds and plants from all over Asia as well as from France. Around his summer palace at Srirangapatnam the ground was laid out in parterres for botanical acclimatisation and propagation. The eighteenth century being the age of 'improvement', he took as close an interest in these schemes as any European 'improver', and was personally responsible for introducing sericulture into Mysore. The silkworms were obtained from Persia, mulberry-planting received official encouragement, and a factory for silk-processing and -weaving was set up. Other factories turned out sugar, paper, gunpowder, knives and scissors. 'The ammunition factories at Bednur produced twenty thousand muskets and guns every year.'¹⁶ As Tipu boasted to a French correspondent, Mysore was self-sufficient in arms.

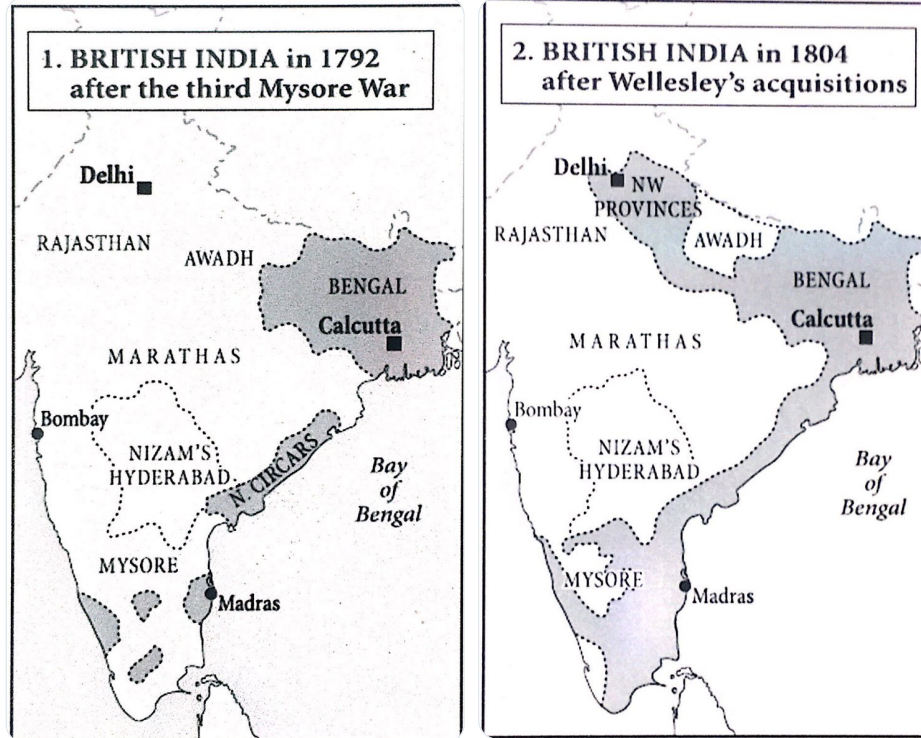
Testimony to the prosperity of his country and to the comparative leniency of his revenue demands comes mainly from the wide-eyed British officials and surveyors who would soon be swarming across Mysore to conduct its post-mortem; in victory the British prided themselves on magnanimity. But from the infrequency of

protest and the failure of intrigues during his lifetime it would seem that Tipu's rule was indeed acceptable to most of his subjects, both Muslim and Hindu. 'Citoyen Tipu', as his revolutionary French contacts would soon call him, was no man of the people. A vindictive and sometimes cruel autocrat, he readily antagonised his enemies, both Indian and British, and was easily demonised by them. Yet, in his passion for reform and modernity some have seen parallels with the radicalism of the Paris revolutionaries. Thomas Munro, perhaps the most respected of all the British officials who later served in Mysore and a genuine admirer of Tipu's achievements, noted mainly his 'restless spirit and a wish to have everything originate from himself'.¹⁷ The highly personalised nature of his rule was both its strength and its weakness. So long as he lived, there was little chance of the British reaching an accommodation with Mysore along the lines of those with Hyderabad or Awadh. Taming Tipu, 'the tiger of Mysore', meant destroying his entire habitat.

It was not a pretty story. If the conquest of Bengal had been partly dictated by a lust for personal gain, that of Mysore would owe much to a lust for personal glory. The Third Mysore War (1790–2) was declared and largely conducted by Lord Cornwallis, the general who had surrendered to George Washington at Yorktown during the American War of Independence. Upright and avowedly pacific, Cornwallis would wait three years before tackling Tipu. Once committed, however, he would pursue his quarry with a regard

for his own dented military reputation that made anything less than Tipu's abject surrender unthinkable. By way of contrast Richard Wellesley, Earl of Mornington, the governor-general responsible

The Duke of Wellington's conquests



The Sikh Empire's success as a cohesive Punjabi state strong enough to expand its borders lasted until a succession war that the Brits used as an excuse to spread their influence. One result of the 1st Sikh War was Hindu rule in Kashmir, with lasting significance...

duct in Sind to that of 'a bully who had been kicked in the streets and went home to beat his wife'. But if the British were the bully, if Sind was the unfortunate wife and Afghanistan the lawless streets, it was Lahore which was the precinct boss. To avoid friction with Ranjit Singh, Dost Muhammad had been demonised; to avoid crossing his Sikh kingdom in the Panjab, the 'Army of the Indus' had marched to Afghanistan so circuitously; and to pre-empt a Sind - Sikh alliance, the amirs had been deposed. Novel though it was, the British were tiptoeing round the sensibilities of an Indian ruler. In Ranjit Singh it seemed as though the tide of British conquest had rolled up against a cliff of Panjabi granite.

Following his non-aggression Treaty of Amritsar with the British in 1809, Ranjit had by 1830 created a kingdom, nay an 'empire', rated by one visitor 'the most wonderful object in the whole world'.⁶ In addition to uniting the Panjab, a phenomenal achievement in itself given the rivalries of its Muslim, Hindu and Sikh factions, and then reclaiming Multan and Peshawar, the 'Raja of Lahore' had also conquered most of the Panjab hill states and occupied Kashmir. In 1836 one of his Dogra vassals then overran neighbouring Ladakh at the western extremity of the Tibetan plateau; and from there in 1840, in one of those rare examples of Indian military aggression beyond its natural frontiers, Zorawar Singh, a Dogra general, actually invaded Tibet itself. Like the 'Army of the Indus' - and at almost exactly the same time (1840-1) - this expedition enjoyed initial success and then sensational disaster. In mid-winter at five thousand metres above sea-level Zorawar's six thousand frostbitten Dogras were confronted by a Chinese host twice as numerous and infinitely better clad. 'On the last fatal day not half of his men could

years earlier. Defeat in central Tibet barely registered on the morale of the Lahore army; and like the long-forgotten empire of Kanishka, the Sikh realm still straddled the Himalayas. As contemporaries and, to the British, formidable opponents, Ranjit and Bonaparte invited more obvious comparisons. A French traveller declared the misshapen Sikh 'a miniature Napoleon'; and the British agreed that both were 'men of military genius'. Moreover 'the Sikh monarchy was Napoleonic in the suddenness of its rise, the brilliancy of its success, and the completeness of its overthrow'.⁸ The comparisons were particularly apposite because of Ranjit's enthusiasm for employing distinguished ex-Napoleonic officers. Under his direction Generals Avitabile and Ventura, Colonels Court and Allard and a host of others converted his infantry and artillery into a sepoy army as effective as that of the Company. 'In training, weapons, organisation, tactics, clothing, system of pay, layout of camps, order of march, regular units of the Sikh army resembled their [British] opponents as closely as they could; indeed in battle it was possible to tell the scarlet-coated sepoy of the Bengal army from the scarlet-coated Sikh only by the colour of his belt.'⁹ Including Muslims and Hindus of Dogra, Jat and rajput origin, the 'Sikh army' was a pan-Punjabi army, but with a Sikh core. 'It may be safe to suggest that more than half of the men ... were Sikh, which would mean about fifty thousand.'¹⁰ In the councils of state and the rewards of office Sikhs similarly predominated. To Ranjit's rule, and especially to his army, Sikhism lent something of that distinctive identity and unity of purpose which characterised the command structure of the Company and made the British so formidable.

With a healthy regard for one another's capabilities, both Cal-

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cutta and Lahore did their utmost to avoid a head-on clash. To humour the British Ranjit professed himself a sincere admirer of their rule, and to humour Ranjit successive governors-general trailed up to Lahore to pay their respects and solicit his assistance in the 'defence' of their frontier. But in 1839, just as the joint Afghan enterprise was getting underway, Ranjit died. A philanderer of many wives and more women, he was not without potential successors.

Yet so personal had been his rule and so absolute his authority that the institutions of sovereignty and government through which a successor might establish himself scarcely existed. As rival court factions sought support for their preferred candidates, authority drained back to its source, the army.

When in 1843 the second maharaja since Ranjit's death was assassinated, a veritable bloodbath ensued. It was no secret that the British were tempted to intervene, and it is quite probable that they were already actively fomenting the chaos. Certainly the massing of thirty-two thousand troops, with boats, along the Satlej frontier, allegedly to prevent the trouble spreading to the British 'Cis-Satlej' states, was highly provocative. With the Sikh army a law unto itself and the contenders for the throne competing for outside support, including that of the British, the mere proximity of this force was enough to ensure its involvement. The inevitable collision took place when in late 1845 word came that another British army was approaching from the east. To forestall it, the Sikh army crossed the Satlej.

The First Sikh War began with two ferocious battles in the vicinity of Ferozepur. From the jaws of defeat, the British edged towards a costly victory which, greatly assisted by the treacherous conduct

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of Sikh courtier-commanders at odds with their own army, was consummated at Aliwal and Sobraon in early 1846. In the latter battle Sikh losses were believed to total ten thousand and British 2400. A conclusive but expensive bid for Lahore itself was then ruled out as the British opted for the usual peace package consisting of an indemnity, partial annexation, a reduction in the Sikh army and other assorted safeguards.

The annexations included another tranche of the Panjab, which advanced the British frontier from the Satlej river to the Beas. Additionally, in lieu of part of the indemnity, Kashmir with all the hill country between the Beas and the Indus was ceded to the British. Though retaining suzerainty over this vast tract, the British then sold it on to Gulab Singh, the Dogra Raja of Jammu who had been one of Ranjit's feudatories. Having distanced himself from his nominal overlords in Lahore during the recent troubles and acted as intermediary in the peace negotiations, Gulab Singh now finally transferred from Sikh to British vassalage.

Thus was formed the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, which would descend through Gulab Singh's successors as maharajas until 1947. The sale, for three-quarters of a million pounds, of an entire Indian state was criticised, particularly when its strategic importance at the apex of British India became more apparent. But the example of a Hindu state from the British empire was a precedent

British tried standardizing their administration prior to the Mutiny. By cutting noblemen out of tax collection process, they could keep more money directly from taxpayers. The nobles who had long been loyal were angered along with the soldiers who lost their status...

the midst of them'.

The doctrine of 'the right of lapse' held that the paramount power might assume the sovereignty of a state whose ruler was either manifestly incompetent or who died without a direct heir. Since the latter ignored the long-established right of an Indian sovereign to adopt an heir of his own choosing, and since the former was obviously a matter of opinion, the doctrine had hitherto been invoked rarely and with great caution. Now it abruptly became an obligation; the government, in Dalhousie's words, was 'bound to take that which is justly and rightly its due'. In fact he annexed seven states in as many years. They included Satara in the Maratha

heartland, where Shivaji's direct descendants had long reigned; the Bhonsles' Nagpur, where insult was added to injury with a callous dispersal sale of the maharaja's effects; and Jhansi, another albeit minor Maratha raj whose youthful rani exhibited something of the character of Ahalyabai Holkar but to whom widowhood now merely brought the added pain of deposition and dispossession.

Other rulers were greatly alarmed. The Mughal emperor had already been demoted to 'King of Delhi' and his image had been removed from the coinage. Now it was being suggested by Dalhousie that his successor be recognised as no more than a prince and that the Delhi Red Fort in which he held court be handed over to the British. Similarly Nana Sahib, the heir adopted by the Peshwa Baji Rao II while in exile near Kanpur, found himself not only stateless but pensionless and title-less. Like other disappointed princes and pensioners, he appealed to London but received no satisfaction. Several senior British political officers, including the Residents at Satara and Nagpur, also raised strong objections and insisted that the deposed dynasties enjoyed the affection of their subjects. But Dalhousie, never a man to welcome advice from subordinates, was unimpressed. In 1856, on the eve of his departure from India, he delivered his masterstroke by annexing Awadh – or Oudh as the British insistently spelled it.

Nearly the largest, probably the richest, and certainly the most senior and the most loyal of all the native states, Awadh's extinction seemed to call into question that good faith on which the British so prided themselves. Since the days of Clive, its rulers had been the Company's allies, graciously accepting a succession of territorial and financial demands and providing much of the man-

But as the Company's own directors had admitted in 1828, it was the British government which was largely responsible; for 'such a state of disorganisation can nowhere attain permanence except where the shortsightedness and rapacity of such a barbarous government is armed with the military strength of a civilised one'.²¹ British troops not only guaranteed Awadh's security; they also helped enforce the state's revenue demands. Its nawabs therefore had little to do but spend the proceeds. Nor was their extravagance always objectionable. Loans extracted from the Awadh government had part-financed several of the Company's wars, and in the case of the Gurkha War of 1814–16 had paid for the entire affair.

Under the terms of an 1801 treaty the nawabs were also bound to rule in the interests of their subjects and to accept British advice when tendered. In fact they did neither. Dalhousie's decision to annex followed repeated warnings and was prompted by genuine outrage over 'this disgrace to our empire'. Whether his decision was also 'just, practicable and right' as he contended is another matter. Legally it was doubtful, and the doubts were compounded first by the nawab's refusal to sign the instrument of accession and secondly by Dalhousie's decision to use limited force. There was also the question of Awadh's very desirable revenue. Had this played no part in British calculations, and had the spendthrift habits of the

nawabs been the main reason for annexation, some of this revenue might reasonably have been earmarked for investment in Awadh. In fact it simply disappeared into the Company's coffers.

To the people of Awadh the whole affair was inexplicable, indeed indefensible.

Few could really understand why their weak, harmless prince, who had done the British no injury, but like his ancestors, had ever been faithful to them, should be thrust aside. He was not a cruel tyrant and his self-indulgence and careless neglect of his subjects' welfare were not, in their eyes, such heinous offences as they were to the British.²²

In place of 'careless neglect' and paternal exploitation the British signalled their arrival by introducing a radical hands-on reformation of the revenue collection. Based on experience gained in the neighbouring North-West Provinces of British India and informed by the principle of dealing direct with the cultivator, it instantly alienated Awadh's influential aristocracy of rich hereditary revenue farmers, or *taluqdars*, while seemingly alarming the cultivating classes whom it was supposed to benefit.

Annexation also had the effect, as in the Panjab, of demobilising part of the Awadh army and, worse still, of undermining the privileges enjoyed by the forty thousand men of the Company's Bengal army who had been recruited in Awadh. With their homeland reduced to the status of a British province, these men lost rights of appeal and redress, previously exercised through British influence with the nawab's government, which had guaranteed to their

62%

Members of India's diaspora that returned home were deeply influential in the independence movement.

The accompanying diaspora of religious and social traditions established a score of 'Little Indias' from Singapore to Georgetown, Guyana, which were as much colonies of Indianisation as their parent settlements were colonies of Anglicisation. As in the long-forgotten days of Kanishka and the Karakoram route, India was successfully projecting its cultural influence just when politically it was in deepest eclipse. But, linked by the telegraph and the shipping line, such agents of outward acculturation now also served as antennae for inward politicisation. From Japan came word of Asian regeneration, from Europe came news of Ireland's struggle against British rule, and from the white settler colonies of Africa and Canada came ideas of autonomy and dominion status. India was not alone. British rule was not immutable. Nor was it invincible.

Augmented by a further exodus in the twentieth century, mainly to Europe, North America and the Gulf states, the diaspora would make the peoples of the subcontinent amongst the most numerous and recognisable of global societies. In Britain alone the number of immigrants from the subcontinent would eventually exceed the total of British civilian residents in India during the nearly two hundred years of British rule. Between 1880 and 1930 the average exodus was running at around a quarter of a million Indians a year, mainly from Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Gujarat. But although they made a significant impact on most of the receiving countries, they had little effect on India's teeming demography. This was in part because most indentured emigrants returned after the expiry of their five-year indenture. So did the troops of the British Indian army who were increasingly deployed on imperial service in China, south-east Asia, Persia and Africa. And so did the barristers, like

Gandhi, the administrators, doctors and others who, bursting from India's universities in ever greater numbers, sometimes travelled abroad to complete their studies or pursue their professions. A few Indians were at last acquiring the first-hand experience of other cultures by which they would be enabled to judge their own identity as Indians rather than as members of a particular Indian community. It would be no coincidence that most of the giants of the independence movement, from Dadabhai Naoroji to M.A. Jinnah, Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, were returnees.

Overseas study was an option only for the privileged. For most Indians an acquaintance with the traditions of Western thought depended on a university education, supported by access to newspapers and books. In the increasingly politicised and cosmopolitan atmosphere of the three main 'presidencies' – by which was now meant the cities of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras – the level of graduate debate was sophisticated and intense. Participants drew on a wide range of argument and ideology, and they avidly followed developments elsewhere in the world, especially Japan's modernisation and the course of Anglo – Irish disentanglement. Their enthusiasm for association and mutual collaboration over a range of political and social issues was equally impressive. But in cities where all manner of caste, professional, communal and linguistic groups were well represented, nationalism was perhaps seen more as the sum of its parts than as an indivisible whole. It was something to be laboriously constructed from within rather than being self-evidently defined from without.

Higher education was restricted to a minute elite; books and newspapers circulated sluggishly outside the main cities. The

Bose became Congress president in 1938, strongly opposing the constitution and supporting mass civil disobedience to force immediate independence. Gandhi & Nehru toppled him, so Bose turned to terrorism, then successfully sought foreign aid...

more cautious approach to radical causes. 'A steady shift to the Right, occasionally veiled by Left rhetoric, increasingly characterised the functioning of the Congress ministries as well as of the party High Command.' Even Nehru, whom the British regarded as little better than a communist, 'increasingly sought in internationalist gestures [like a trip to war-torn Spain] a kind of surrogate for effective Left action at home'.⁸

The resulting discontent in the socialist and communist wings of Congress provided the radical Bengali leader, Subhas Chandra Bose, with his chance. A vehement *bhadralok* opponent of the entire 1935 constitution, in 1938 he secured re-election as Congress president on a platform of uncompromising opposition to the new constitution, to the communal awards and in particular to the federation. Congress was to withdraw its collaboration in the provinces and a new wave of *satyagraha* was to be launched in support of immediate independence. Gandhi had virtually retired from Congress in 1934, but, deeply distrustful of Bose, he again returned to the fray and, with the support of Nehru and others, engineered Bose's downfall in 1939. Bose, or 'Netaji' ('Leader') as he would soon be known, responded by setting up a radical party known as the Forward Bloc and espousing terrorist tactics. In 1940 he was arrested. He escaped on the eve of his trial, fled to Afghanistan and thence to Moscow and Berlin.

It was under Tokyo's auspices that Bose would next surface, literally, when he landed from a submarine in Japanese-held Singapore in 1943. Like Sukarno in Indonesia, and despite the same left-wing reservations, Bose admired Japan's disciplined and defiant emergence as a world power and was encouraged by her champion-

Congress' lack of cooperation with UK in WWII gave Jinnah and the Moslem League an opportunity to gain legitimacy for their vague proposal of an autonomous or independent Islamic state(s).

The Muslim League would be one of the few beneficiaries of Nazi aggression. As Jinnah would later put it, 'the war which nobody welcomed proved to be a blessing in disguise.' It would enable the League to make good its claim to represent the majority of Muslims and Jinnah, its leader since 1936, to make good his claim to a principal role in the transference of power. Although lacking the charm of Nehru, let alone the fire of Bose or the popular appeal of Gandhi, Jinnah possessed a formidable mind in which intimidating resolve combined with unequalled skills as a tactician. No leader of the twentieth century has a greater claim to have fathered a nation. Schooled in the adversarial techniques of the bar and, as a Bombay Ismaili, comparatively unencumbered by the taboos and concerns of more orthodox Muslims, he soared above both colleagues and adversaries, a lofty and awesome figure immaculately suited for direction rather than incitement. But when he stooped to strike, he did so with effect. Choosing a date and a venue calculated to point up the failure of Nehru's 1930 proclamation of *purna swaraj*, in early 1940 also in Lahore he secured the League's endorsement of a very different resolution which changed the whole substance of the independence debate.

Although known as the 'Pakistan Resolution', the Lahore text made no mention of 'Partition' or 'Pakistan' as such. The latter term was still an academic fiction. It had first been adopted by a group of Muslims at Cambridge in the early 1930s as a wishful acronym for a greater Muslim homeland consisting of P(unjab), A(fghania, i.e. the North-West Frontier), K(ashmir), I(ran), S(ind), T(urkharistan), A(fghanistan) and (Baluchista)N. It also meant, according to its inventor, 'the land of the *paks* – the spiritually pure and clean'.

Since there was no 'B' for Bengal in 'PAKISTAN' it was presumably in this latter sense that it was subsequently applied to the Lahore Resolution.

The Resolution itself stemmed from a shuffling of various constitutional proposals evolved by Muslims anxious about the federation proposal and unhappy with the experience of provincial Congress government, or 'Hindu Raj'. Some of these proposals included a Muslim homeland in the south (an 'Usmanistan' based on the nizams Hyderabad) as well as homelands in the north-west and the east. But the final Resolution was both more realistic and more vague. In recognition of the fact that Muslims represented a separate 'nation' it called for a constitution whereby 'areas in which Muslims are numerically in a majority, as in the North-Western and Eastern zones of India, should be grouped to constitute "Independent States" in which the constituent elements shall be autonomous and sovereign.'

Whether these 'states' were to be linked in a federation, either with one another or with the rest of India, was left unclear. Bengalis who eventually found themselves in East Pakistan could thus reasonably claim that under the terms of the Lahore Resolution they should have been independent. Also unclear was the geography of the 'areas' and 'zones' to be so 'grouped'. Existing provinces were not mentioned by name, partly because the League could as yet lay no claim to overwhelming support in any of them, and partly because Jinnah was keeping his options open. Indeed it may be that the whole Resolution represented a tactical ploy or, as the viceroy thought, 'a bargaining position'. It would soon become something much less negotiable, but the hint of a separate Muslim sovereignty

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certainly had the effect of uniting Muslims behind the League and significantly empowering Jinnah in his negotiations with the Congress leadership and the British.

British attitudes were now heavily conditioned by the war effort. To secure India's military support and its political acquiescence, initiatives and incentives came thick and fast. Schemes for party representation in the central government and in the conduct of the war, as well as offers of a constituent assembly and dominion status, climaxed with a mission by Sir Stafford Cripps in March 1942. By then Singapore had fallen, 100,000 imperial troops, mostly Indian, were in Japanese detention, and Japanese forces were rapidly advancing through Burma on India itself. It was a moment for closing ranks, for the bold gesture and the magnanimous response. The Cripps Mission, brainchild of the Labour leader Clement Attlee and headed by a man known to be sympathetic to Indian independence, was seen by the British as just such a move. To previous offers it added a clear pledge, as soon as the war was over, of a dominion status which, as recently redefined, amounted to full independence.

Two years earlier such terms might have been welcomed. But, as so often in the past, London was advancing what India already banked on. By now the issue was not so much independence, or even when, but whose; and in this the Cripps offer was deeply disappointing. Gandhi mischievously likened it to a post-dated cheque on a failing bank. But the real problem lay not with the bank or the date but the name of the payee. For the Cripps offer, like all the others, betrayed a British willingness to appease Muslim nationalism, princely autonomy and provincial aspirations by endorsing the possibility that some provinces and states might eventually se-

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cede. This was still anathema to all shades of Congress opinion. It challenged the idea of a single and indivisible Indian nation on which Congress's demands for independence had always rested; it contradicted the idea of Congress as a secular party representing all of India's communities and transcending all religious differences; and it cast doubt on the primacy of democratic representation on which both the national consensus and Congress's supremacy relied.

'It is possible, though by no means certain, that if from the outset the British had made it clear that they would never countenance the partition of India, the demand for Pakistan would have been dropped.'² Like many other British Indian officials, Penderel Moon, himself a key figure in the Partition saga, would see the break-up of India not just as a colossal human tragedy but as an enduring political tragedy. Had Linlithgow, the wartime viceroy, been less 'casual' about the demand, and had he tried 'to heal the breach between Congress and the League', Jinnah might have been forced to compromise. But the priority for Linlithgow, as for all his beleaguered countrymen, was the war. Post-imperial strategies were an indulgence which the desperate battle for survival, in Asia as in Europe, as yet precluded. Confronting Jinnah over Pakistan and so inviting the League's hostility at a time when Congress was already refusing to co-operate with the war effort was unthinkable. It could in fact be argued that it was Congress which badly miscalculated; by withholding its support for the war, indeed endeavouring to exploit Britain's wartime predicament, it practically obliged the British to play along with the Pakistan idea.

Personally both Gandhi and Nehru wished the Allies well. But to

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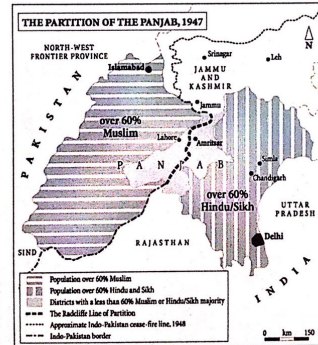
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Filled with veterans and religiously heterogeneous, Punjab turned into a bloodbath in the partition of the Raj into India & Pakistan. Syncretists in particular suffered, as they fell into neither Hindu nor Moslem camp.

It was otherwise in the Panjab. Here, thanks to British recruitment preferences, all communities had strong military connections and cherished martial traditions. The Muslims of the Panjab, unlike the mostly lower-caste converts of East Bengal, included descendants of long-converted rajput tribes (Bhatti, Ghakkar, etc.) and of the Turks, Mongols and Afghans who had so often traversed the region. The Hindus of the Panjab, mostly Jats and Dogras, were reckoned no less 'sturdy', whether as aggressive agriculturalists or indomitable infantrymen. And the Sikhs, the third dimension in the Panjab's communal equation, provided some two-fifths of the entire Indian army and constituted the most militant religious brotherhood on the subcontinent. Though a majority in very few areas, the Sikhs were fairly evenly spread throughout the province which they regarded both as their religious homeland and as the core of Sikh 'empire'.

The first troubles in the Panjab broke out in early 1947. Although the Muslim League had made sensational gains in the 1946 elections, a coalition ministry cobbled together by remnants of the old Unionist Party with Sikh and Congress support denied it power.

The League therefore launched a programme of civil disobedience and brought down the ministry in March 1947. Sikhs, who had most to lose from the Panjab becoming Pakistani, responded by demanding their own 'Sikhistan'. There were riots in many of the main cities and by August the death toll had risen to about five thousand. But by then the Sikhs, following reassurances from Congress about their status within what would become India's slice of the Panjab, had accepted the inevitability of partition. There was no lull in the violence, but official anxieties, British as well as Indian, were seemingly allayed.



for miles.¹¹

For many communities, self-definition was as untidy and implausible as territorial definition. The Meo or Mewati people of the desert fringes south of Delhi had long combined Islamic practices with devotion to Lords Ram and Krishna. Although few supported the Muslim League or knew of Jinnah, they were fair game for their Hindu Jat and Rajput neighbours, who in 1947 massacred and dispossessed them. Cries for help from places like Gurgaon and Rewari, that today bristle with call centres, went unheeded. The Meos accordingly headed *en masse* for Pakistan, only to be there stigmatised as infidel Hindus. Thousands then trekked back to Delhi and a very uncertain future when the killings subsided.

The new boundary, drawn up in great haste by a League – Congress commission under the chairmanship of an English judge (Sir Cyril Radcliffe), was not announced until after the Independence celebrations. The Sikhs had demanded that the line of Partition, whilst dividing the majority non-Muslim East Panjab from the majority Muslim West Panjab, make exceptions for sites and shrines important to them by virtue of religious and historical associations. Thus, for instance, Lahore, Ranjit Singh's erstwhile capital, should not simply be allocated to Pakistan because its population was predominantly Muslim. In fact the Boundary Commission made no such allowances. Demography alone was decisive; Lahore went to Pakistan.

Anticipating a massive influx of co-religionists, Sikhs in the east began expelling non-Sikhs and appropriating their lands in early August. A response to earlier Muslim expulsions in the west, this merely provoked more of the same. The announcement of the actual boundary on 17 August lent a cutthroat urgency to the tit-for-tat. The flow of refugees became a flood; word of atrocities, rapes and mass killings brought the inevitable retaliations. As the violence escalated, ghost trains chuffed silently across the new frontier carrying nothing but corpses. In the 'land of the five rivers' the waters ran with blood and the roads ran with mangled migrants. The twenty thousand troops who materialised to police the transfer proved at best ineffective, at worst infected by the madness. 'Of one convoy that recently arrived,' reported the still-British governor of West Panjab to readers of *The Times*, 'over one thousand who had struggled on till they reached the frontier-post just laid down and died. They could go no further. The road was littered with corpses